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# THE HILLS TIMES

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## Mob tortures youths over theft charge

**GOLAGHAT, Aug 2:** Two youths, alleged to be involved in a theft, were allegedly assaulted by a mob led by three brothers in Golaghat district of Assam, police said on Saturday.

Of the three accused brothers, one is a local BJP leader, and another is associated with the All Assam Students' Union (AASU).

"The incident took place at the Gelabil area in Sarupathar yesterday. Two young men were brutally beaten up and subjected to inhumane torture as salt and chilli water were put on their wounds," a police officer said.

The victims were subjected to torture for allegedly being involved in a theft, he said.

"The two injured youths, one of whom is a minor, have been admitted to a (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## NFR inks pacts for sustainable projects

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** Northeast Frontier Railway on Saturday said it has signed separate agreements with different organisations, including IIT-Guwahati and Assam Pollution Control Board, for projects related to sustainability.

A tripartite agreement was signed among NFR, Assam Pollution Control Board (APCB) and Kusum Udyog to develop Guwahati Railway Station into a 100 per cent plastic recycling hub.

A dedicated six-member task force led by the Station Superintendent, Guwahati, has been constituted to steer the initiative, a statement said.

"Efforts include improving garbage storage infrastructure, operationalising a compost-making plant and organising frequent passenger (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Over 1,500 families displaced; 11,000 bighas of land cleared First phase of Golaghat forest eviction drive concludes

**GOLAGHAT, Aug 2:** The first phase of a massive eviction drive to clear alleged encroachments from almost 11,000 bighas (nearly 1,500 hectares) of forest land in Assam's Golaghat district concluded on Wednesday, officials said.

The five-day eviction drive has displaced around 1,500 families, mostly from the Muslim community, they added. The exercise to clear the alleged encroached land within Rengma Reserve Forest in Uriamghat along the Assam-Nagaland border in Sarupathar sub-division started on Tuesday.

Although the government has claimed that the area was encroached, senior officials acknowledged that there were houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), water connection under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), government schools under Sarba Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), sub-



health centre under National Health Mission (NHM) and electricity connections to almost every household, besides markets, mosques, madrasahs and churches. Addressing a press conference at Sarupathar, Special Chief Secre-

tary (Forest) M K Yadava said: "The ongoing operation has so far cleared approximately 8,900 bighas (nearly 1,200 hectares) of protected forest land and dismantled over 4,000 unauthorised structures."

## Occupation of public land by native people not encroachment: CM

**UDALGURI, Aug 2:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the government does not consider unauthorised occupation of public land by indigenous people as encroachment.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a BJP programme here, Sarma said the government will continue its eviction drives against encroachments by suspected foreigners across the state.

"There are two types of encroachments. If indigenous people are living (unauthorisedly), then we don't consider it as encroachment. Those who have come from



Bangladesh, we consider only those cases as encroachments," he said.

Sarma's comments came on the backdrop of a massive eviction drive to clear alleged encroachments from almost 11,000 bighas (nearly 1,500 hectares) of forest land in Golaghat district.

"The places where foreigners and doubtful citizens are living, we will carry out evictions there. That's our goal and we are proceeding accordingly," the CM stressed.

On July 25, Sarma had said that all unauthorised occupation of VGR (Village Grazing Reserve), PGR (Professional Grazing Reserve), Satras, Namghars, forest land and other public areas would be cleared of encroachments in a phased manner.

He had earlier said that 1.29 lakh bighas (over 42,500 acres) have been cleared of encroachment in the last four (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Sonowal bats for increasing agricultural productivity

PM releases 20<sup>th</sup> PM-KISAN tranche; ₹422.05 cr disbursed to 20.31 lakh farmers

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday released the 20th instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme from Varanasi, disbursing ₹20,500 crore as direct benefit to over 9.7 crore farmers across the country.

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal joined the programme virtually from Dibrugarh, where he noted that ₹422.05 crore had been released to 20.31 lakh beneficiaries in Assam under the scheme.

Terming the moment as a significant stride in agrarian empowerment, Sonowal praised the Prime Minister as a "visionary leader empowering the farming community with Krishak Shakti."

The programme in Dibrugarh was organised at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) by Assam Agricultural University in coordination

with the District Agriculture Department.

During his interaction with farmers, the Union Minister emphasised the need to increase agricultural productivity through innovation and grassroots participation.

"Our farmers are the backbone of the nation," Sonowal said. "With initiatives like PM-KISAN, the Modi Government is providing direct financial support and ushering in a new era of agrarian empowerment. I urge every farmer to be a partner in India's unstoppable journey towards economic progress."

The Minister also underlined the broader impact of various government welfare programmes over the last 11 years, including PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala, Saubhagya, Ayushman Bharat, SHG schemes for women, and large-scale infrastructure (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)

## Kopili River (NW-57) revived after a decade

Maiden cargo run marks intra-state river transport breakthrough

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** In a significant step towards revitalising Assam's river-based logistics and reviving intra-state cargo transport, National Waterway-57 (Kopili River) was operationalised on Saturday with the maiden trial cargo movement from Chandrapur in Kamrup to Hatsingimari in South Salmara.

The initiative, flagged off from Govardhan Bridge in Chandrapur, marks the first such cargo movement on the 46-km stretch of NW-



57 since 2014.

The inland cargo vessel MV VV Giri, equipped with self-loading capabilities, carried 300 metric tonnes of cement from M/s Star

Cement along a 300-km route spanning NW-57 (Kopili) and NW-2 (Brahmaputra).

According to an official statement, the voyage is expected to take approximately 12 to 14 hours.

This movement reinstates waterborne freight transport within the state and strengthens the broader goal of multimodal connectivity in the Northeast. Describing the development as a "watershed moment," Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, "With the operationalisation (CONTD.ON PAGE-2)



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

## 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Organ Donation Day 3 August 2025

### Angdaan-Jeevan Sanjeevani Abhiyaan

#### Did you know?

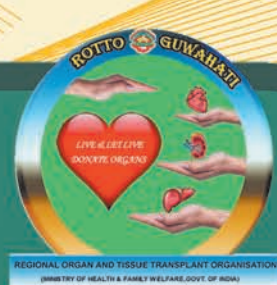
- Over 3,00,000 patients are on the waiting list for organ transplantation in India
- Approximately 20 individuals die daily while awaiting organ transplantation
- A healthy person aged 18 or older can voluntarily authorize organ donation for therapeutic use within legal guidelines
- After brain-stem/ cardiac death a person regardless of age can donate multiple organs and give life to many patients

Donate Organs, Save Lives

One can donate – Heart, Lungs, Intestine, Liver, Pancreas, Kidney



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'A person can save eight lives  
by donating organs.  
Give someone the gift of life  
And let your legacy live'

- Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma  
Chief Minister, Assam



# India on path to becoming third-largest economy, must remain alert to own economic priorities: PM

**VARANASI, Aug 2:** Asserting that India is on the path to becoming the world's third-largest economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that the country must remain alert to its own economic priorities amid the instability and uncertainty facing the world economy.

PM Modi's remarks came just days after US President Donald Trump called India a "dead economy" after announcing a 25 per cent tariff on the import of Indian goods along with an unspecified "penalty" for buying Russian military equipment and crude oil. Addressing a public meeting in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi on Saturday, Modi said, "As we talk about economic progress, I want to draw your attention to the current global scenario."

"The world economy is facing instability and uncertainty. In such times, countries are focusing solely on their own interests. India, too, is on the path to becoming the world's third-largest economy and must remain alert to its own economic priorities."

The prime minister also made a renewed push for 'Swadeshi', stressing that every party, leader and citizen must work to promote indigenous goods if "we want India to become the third-largest economy".

Making a special appeal to traders and shopkeepers, the prime minister said, "At a time when the world is going through uncertainty, let us take a pledge to sell only Swadeshi goods from our shops and markets. Promoting made in India goods will be the



truest service to the country."

He also urged people to be conscious consumers, saying, "Whatever we buy, we should ask ourselves - has an Indian toiled to make this? If it has been made by the sweat of our people, with their skills, that product is Swadeshi for us. We must adopt the mantra of 'Vocal for Local'."

"The feeling of Swadeshi in every action will define our future. This will also be a true tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. Only through collective effort can we fulfil the dream of a developed India," Modi said.

The prime minister, who was addressing a massive public gathering on Saturday in Banauli village, highlighted the government's farmer-centric policies in detail.

He said the government is constantly working for the well-being of

farmers.

Calling for a national movement to support local products, the prime minister said, "This is not just about Modi saying it, every Indian should say this -- if we want India to become the third-largest economy, every political party and every leader, keeping aside their hesitations, must work in the nation's interest and awaken the spirit of Swadeshi among the people."

The US tariff action is being seen as a pressure tactic to get New Delhi to agree to demands made by the US, which has, in recent days, got favourable trade deals with major partners like Japan, the UK and the European Union.

India has especially toughened its stance on extending duty concessions on agri products, dairy and GM foods in the proposed bilateral trade agree-

ment (BTA) with the US.

With the US not able to finalise a deal with India so far, Trump on Thursday announced the imposition of an additional 25 per cent import duty on Indian goods entering American markets from August 7.

Earlier, this duty was to be imposed from August 1. The President has also not specified the penalty that he announced against India for buying crude oil and military equipment from Russia.

In the backdrop of Trump's "dead economy" barb at India, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had told Parliament on Thursday that India is the world's fastest-growing major economy and widely expected to be the "third largest economy" in a few years.

Goyal also said India will take all necessary steps to safeguard and promote national interest and that the implications of the US tariffs are being examined.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump had said, "I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care."

"We have done very little business with India, their Tariffs are too high, among the highest in the World."

His remarks were echoed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who said President Trump has stated a "fact", prompting a strong condemnation from the BJP. While announcing the tariff, Trump described India's trade policies as "most strenuous and obnoxious". (PTI)

## Kharif crops sowing this season may exceed last year's level: ICRA

**KOLKATA, Aug 2:** Research firm ICRA said that kharif crops sowing this season may exceed the level of last year by a reasonable margin. Aided by favourable monsoon, kharif sowing has been completed on 76 per cent of the normal sown area and is up by a rise of four per cent year-on-year as of July 2025, ICRA said in its latest report.

Sown during the rainy season months of June and July, the kharif crops are mainly moong, rice and maize.

The IMD forecast of above-normal rainfall during August and September augurs well for the continued sowing of kharif crops, and the replenishment of reservoirs will favour the sowing during the rabi season from October to March, the report said.

According to the ICRA report, India received above-normal rainfall during July 2025. The quantum of rainfall during the entire Southwest Monsoon season is estimated



to exceed 106 per cent of the long period average (LPA), the report also said.

ICRA estimates the gross value added (GVA) growth of agriculture, forestry and fishing during the first quarter of 2025-26 to be around 4.5 per cent. Also growth in real rural wages increased to four per cent in May 2025 from zero levels in January 2025. This will help in boosting rural consumption demand, the report said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Kopili River (NW-57) revived

of NW-57, we are not only reviving a vital artery of trade within Assam but also moving towards a transport system that is economical, efficient, and environmentally sustainable."

He added that more than 1,168 km of National Waterways in Assam have now been made operational, including the Brahmaputra (NW-2), Barak (NW-16), Dhansiri (NW-31), and Kopili (NW-57).

Sonowal highlighted that the initiative is part of the Centre's commitment under Maritime India Vision 2030 and PM Gati Shakti, which aim to develop sustainable and integrated transport infrastructure across the country.

"This development aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a thriving and self-reliant Northeast," the minister said.

Emphasising the economic and ecological benefits of inland water transport, the minister noted that the current shipment is equivalent to replacing approximately 23 truckloads of cargo. "By shifting cargo from road to water, we cut emissions, reduce traffic congestion, and lower transport costs," he said.

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), the nodal agency under the Ministry, has been working on realising the navigational potential of key rivers in the Northeast.

According to the official statement, the trial run on NW-57 is a turning point in Assam's logistics landscape and is expected to pave the way for regular cargo and passenger movement on the Kopili river route.

Concluding his remarks, Sonowal stated, "The Kopili cargo movement is a symbol of the new Assam — connected, empowered, and aligned with India's growth story. We will continue to expand the scale of river transport to ensure prosperity for our riverine communities."

## Occupation of public land

years, and around 29 lakh bighas (more than 9.5 lakh acres) of land are still under encroachment in the state. Sarma had claimed that these huge swathes of land were under encroachment of "illegal Bangladeshis and doubtful citizens" in the state. (PTI)

## Mob tortures youths

hospital, and they are recovering now," the officer said. A purported video of the assault has gone viral on social media, attracting sharp reactions.

"The three brothers are the main accused in the torture. They have been absconding since the incident, and we are looking for them," the officer said. The main suspects were identified as Raju Shreshtha, Shasanka Shreshtha and Ranjit Shreshtha, he said.

Raju was the general secretary of the BJP's Borpathar mandal, while Shasanka was the president of AASU's Sarupathar regional committee.

As soon as the video of the attack went viral, the BJP and AASU relieved the duo of their organisational responsibilities. A senior officer said police have already arrested one person, identified as Kamal Gogoi, who was a part of the mob.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "I have come to know about the incident a while ago. We will definitely do a thorough investigation and the culprits will be punished." (PTI)

## NFR inks pacts for

awareness drives," it said. The second agreement signed with IIT-Guwahati focuses on the introduction of biodegradable and compostable bags to replace the existing packets used for bedroll distribution in AC coaches.

"The pilot will begin with the Brahmaputra Mail operating between Kamakhya and New Delhi with plans to scale the same initiative across all Guwahati and Kamakhya-based trains, and eventually to the entire NFR network," the statement said.

This initiative merges collaborative research with field-level implementation, targeting a shift towards eco-friendly and passenger-conscious alternatives, it added.

"By integrating environmental sustainability into its operational framework, NFR continues to lead in creating a cleaner and greener railway ecosystem for the zone," NFR Chief Public Relations Officer Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said. (PTI)

## Over 1,500 families displaced

community, while those having FRC certificates are Bodos, Nepalis, Manipuris and other communities, the official added.

An official release said over the course of past five days, vast stretches of encroached forest land in Rengma have been reclaimed with illegal structures dismantled across key high-density zones, including Bidyapur, Pithaghat, Sonaribeel, Doyalpur, Dolonipathar, Kherbari, Anandapur and Madhupur.

"The first phase of the large-scale eviction drive in Rengma Reserve Forest concluded successfully today with final operations carried out seamlessly in Bidyapur and No.2 Madhupur. The day's activities remained peaceful and without resistance," it added.

Commenting on such drives, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Udalguri said the government does not consider unauthorised occupation of public land by indigenous people as encroachment.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a BJP function, he said the government will continue its eviction drives against encroachments by suspected foreigners across the state.

"There are two types of encroachments. If indigenous people are living (unauthorisedly), then we don't consider it as encroachment. Those who have come from Bangladesh, we consider only those cases as encroachments."

"The places where foreigners and doubtful citizens are living, we will carry out evictions there. That's our goal and we are proceeding accordingly," the CM stressed.

The local BJP MLA from Sarupathar, Biswajit Phukan, said an eviction drive will continue on Sunday in parts of the Nambor South Reserve Forest, particularly in Gelajan and No. 3 Rajapukhuri.

He highlighted the potential of Rengma Reserve Forest as a future eco-tourism destination and emphasized that such drives are essential to curb "illegal activities", and ensure long-term ecological and administrative benefits for Assam.

The operation was led by the forest department with active support from the Golaghat District Administration and Assam Police in close coordination with the Government of Nagaland and the Nagaland Police.

To ensure smooth and peaceful execution of the operation, an extensive security arrangement was put in place with the involvement of CRPF.

Speaking to PTI, the affected families had earlier questioned the rationale of the eviction drive and claimed that they were brought to this location by the previous governments to protect the area from invasion of Nagaland.

They claimed that most of the alleged encroachers were settled in the forest by the Janata Party government, headed by ex-CM Golap Borbora, in 1978-79 and the first AGP government, which came to power in 1985.

All the government schools in the alleged encroached area were converted into forest camps before the start of the eviction drive.

Notably, the Assam Legislative Assembly was informed in March that nearly 83,000 hectares of the state's land are currently under occupation by four neighbouring states, with Nagaland accounting for the largest share — approximately 59,490.21 hectares. (PTI)

## Kopili River (NW-57) revived

development, which, he said, have lifted over 25 crore people out of poverty. Referring to the cumulative progress under PM-KISAN, Sonowal said over ₹3.7 lakh crore has so far been directly transferred to farmers' accounts in annual tranches of ₹6,000, strengthening the rural economy and ensuring financial security at the grassroots.

Several dignitaries were present at the Dibrugarh programme, including MLAs Ponakan Baruah, Binod Hazarika, and Chakradhar Gogoi; Assam Tourism Development Corporation Chairman Rituparna Baruah; Assam Petrochemicals Ltd Chairman Bikul Deka; Deputy Mayor Ujjwal Phukan; DDA Chairman Asim Hazarika; Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council CEM Tangkeshwar Sonowal; Dibrugarh Deputy Commissioner Bikram Kairi, and Zilla Parishad Chairperson Pushpanjali Sonowal.

## Radisson Blu hosts 'The Great Indian Grill Games'

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** In a celebration of flavours, fire, and food artistry, Radisson Blu Guwahati has launched 'The Great Indian Grill Games', a culinary fest currently underway at its signature restaurant, The Great Kabab Factory (TGKF). The food festival, which began earlier this week, will continue till August 10, 2025, bringing together a star-studded lineup of master chefs and regional grilling traditions from across India.

According to an official statement issued by the hotel, the event is conceived as a competitive yet friendly culinary face-off, where TGKF's acclaimed chefs showcase their signature dishes using traditional grilling methods, age-old marinades, and region-specific spice blends.

Diners are invited to experience an evolving menu that reflects the diversity and depth of India's grilling heritage — from succulent kebabs and tandoori classics to contemporary grill interpretations.

Speaking about the event, Ankur Mehrotra, General Manager of Radisson Blu Guwahati, said, "The Great Indian Grill Games is our homage to India's love for grilling - a deliciously competitive showcase of technique, talent, and tradition, all under one roof. We are excited to welcome food lovers from across the city to witness this spectacular convergence of master chefs and their timeless flavours."

## PMI calls for strengthened G2G cooperation to tackle illicit tobacco trade

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** Philip Morris International (PMI) has called for sustained government-to-government (G2G) dialogue with source and transit countries as a critical strategy to address the growing threat of illicit tobacco trade.

The appeal was made during the ASIA Security Conference & Exhibition 2025 on Anti-Counterfeiting, Illicit Trade, and Brand Protection, held in New Delhi. Speaking at the event, Rodney Van Dooren, Head of Illicit Trade Prevention at PMI, underlined the urgency of inter-ministerial coordination beyond customs and the need for unified transnational efforts to close enforcement gaps across the supply chain.

Addressing a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, enforcement agencies, brand owners, and security solution providers, Van Dooren said illicit trade was a global threat that consistently weakened legitimate businesses, eroded government revenues, and exposed consumers to dangerous, unregulated products.

He pointed out that India suffers an annual loss of approximately \$1.65 billion due to illicit tobacco trade, with nearly a quarter of the domestic market affected and around 12,000 jobs lost every year.

He also highlighted that ASEAN countries collectively lose between \$3 and \$4 billion in tobacco tax revenue annually as a result of the same problem.

The conference was informed that Cambodia has been identified as a source of counterfeit cigarettes, with India, Thailand, and the Philippines among the most affected markets. Vietnam, Singapore, Thai-

land, and Malaysia serve as key transit countries in this network.

The World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control has identified India as both a transit hub and a destination market for illicit tobacco trade.

Van Dooren explained that the trade operates through transnational smuggling routes that require international cooperation to dismantle. Global tax losses from illicit tobacco are estimated at \$40 to \$50 billion every year, representing 14 to 15 percent of total global cigarette consumption or approximately \$60 billion in cigarettes.

Counterfeit cigarettes pose significant public health threats, with reports showing that they may contain up to 160 percent more tar, 133 percent more carbon monoxide, and other harmful substances.

Illicit whites—cigarettes legally produced but exported without adherence to the laws of the destination market—comprise over 40 percent of the global illicit cigarette trade. PMI reiterated its commitment to combating illicit tobacco trade through a long-standing strategy focused on research and intelligence, protection of supply chains, collaboration with partners, stakeholder engagement, and awareness-building.

Over the past decade, the company has partnered with law enforcement and investigative agencies worldwide.

In India and abroad, it has implemented advanced Track and Trace systems in more than 150 markets, voluntarily deploying technologies that improve transparency, reinforce regulatory compliance, and reduce the presence of illegal tobacco products.

## Indians overthink pizza more than politics: Report

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** A new study released jointly by Center Fresh and YouGov has revealed the extent to which overthinking has become ingrained in everyday life across India, with 81% of respondents saying they spend more than three hours a day overanalysing routine situations. Titled the India Overthinking Report, the study uncovers that one in four Indians identify overthinking as a constant part of their lives — from choosing what to eat to decoding a simple text message.

Conducted across a diverse demographic of students, working professionals, and self-employed individuals in Tier 1, 2, and 3 towns, the report examined four key aspects of daily life — food and lifestyle habits, digital and social life, dating and relationships, and professional decisions. The findings, according to the official release, reflect how a hyper-connected world, driven by social media and societal expectations, is fuelling a national habit of second-guessing. One of the report's standout insights relates to food choices.

A staggering 63% of Indians admitted they find choosing a dish at a restaurant more stressful than selecting a political leader during elections — a number that climbs to 69% in southern India.

The overthinking doesn't stop there. In the professional realm, 42% of people immediately assume the worst when they receive a curt "Ok" from their boss. This reaction was seen almost equally among women (42%) and men (41%), with the terse response triggering anxiety across generations.

Social media, too, emerges as a major arena for indecision and self-doubt. Sixty-one percent of respondents confessed to spending more than five hours mulling over whether to post a particular story or picture.

While concerns range from choice of filters and background music to fear of judgment, the pressure is especially intense for Gen Z and women.

## LOST

I Sri Vanshraj Chauhan son of Lt. Sukhari Chauhan have lost my Myadi Patta bearing number -245 and Daag no. 665/No 505 . Anyone find please return it at my following address . Vanshraj Chauhan Vill:- Balijan( Bakalia Town) P.O.+P.S.- Bakalia Mouza :- Langpher Dist:- Karbi Anglong Contact No- 7002398356

## NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Sultana Begum to Sultana Begum Laskar by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

No.KDB/BTC/6th ASFC/NT/2025-26/1299					
Date 30/07/2025					
<b>SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER</b>					
Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty-Five Paise) only with a validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed F-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of Class-II and Class-I (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under 6 <sup>th</sup> Finance Commission Fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. on 19.08.2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M.					
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Amount	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender paper	Time of Completion
1	Imp. of road with E/F & S/G at Maoriagaon LP School to Nabokanta house at Maoriagaon Pt-II.	18,00,000/-	18000.00 (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 360000/- (2% for General)	540/-	3 Months
2	Imp. of road with E/F & S/G at Maoriagaon Chariali to Mahen house at Maoriagaon.	18,00,000/-	18000.00 (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 360000/- (2% for General)	540/-	3 Months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 30.07.2025 to 19.08.2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of Tender paper in the form of demand draft/Banker Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer,  
Kokrajhar Dev. Block, Titaguri

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2272

No.GDB/6 <sup>th</sup> -FC/206/2022-23/215					
Date 29/07/2025					
<b>TENDER No-26, FOR BIDS (IFB)</b>					
Selected tenders affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paise) only with at validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days which will subsequently to be covered and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the intending Registered Contractors of all categories of the Assam PWD (Bldg. & Roads) for submitting tender for the work below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2:30 PM 29-07-2025 to 18-08-2025 and will be opened on the date 19-08-2025 at 2:30 PM.					
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Tender Value	Earnest money 1% for ST/SC/ OBC/MOBC & 2% for GNL	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Const. of box culvert near Suagpur high school under Suagpur VDC, under 6 <sup>th</sup> -FC fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 (1 <sup>st</sup> -Inst)	4,00,000.00	Rs 4,000/- & Rs. 8,000/-	Rs 200/-	3 (Three month)
2	Const. of box culvert at Pipili village Goulbasti road under Oubari VDC, under 6 <sup>th</sup> -FC fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 (1 <sup>st</sup> -Inst)	4,00,000.00	Rs 4,000/- & Rs. 8,000/-	Rs 200/-	3 (Three month)
3	Const. of RCC slab culvert near Sanab Boro house at Suagpur VDC, under 6 <sup>th</sup> -FC fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 (1 <sup>st</sup> -Inst)	8,00,000.00	Rs 8,000/- & Rs. 16,000/-	Rs 400/-	3 (Three month)

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the Office of the undersigned. Tender 4paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 11:30 AM in all working days from 29-07-2025 to 18-08-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker Cheque/Bank Draft/ Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Goreswar Development Block.

Sd/-  
Block Development Officer,  
Goreswar Dev. Block, Goreswar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/2311



# BTC chief launches drought relief programme amid climatic crisis in BTR

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** In view of the ongoing drought-like conditions affecting large parts of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), BTC Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro has launched a comprehensive Drought Relief Programme to provide immediate assistance to farmers and strengthen the region's agricultural resilience against future climate challenges.

According to an official statement, the programme has been rolled out under the mission "Vibrant BTR, Vibrant Agriculture – From Mission to Action" as a response to the severe dry spell impacting crop cultivation in the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Tamulpur.

The Udalguri district is also witnessing moderate drought conditions, posing a serious threat to rice production and the food security of thousands of farming households in the region.

The initiative comes at a critical time, with BTR experiencing significantly reduced rainfall and erratic monsoon behaviour, which experts attribute to the ongoing effects of climate change.

The prolonged dry conditions have left vast tracts of agricultural land parched, further stressing farmers who rely heavily on the kharif crop cycle.



As part of the newly announced programme, 5% of the BTR's Agriculture Budget will be reserved exclusively for disaster management purposes.

The fund will cover a range of agricultural emergencies including drought, floods, pest attacks, and other extreme weather events.

Officials said this dedicated allocation will enable timely and targeted financial assistance to farmers in times of distress.

To strengthen local response mechanisms, the administration will establish Special Disaster Monitoring Cells in every Agriculture Development Officer (ADO) Circle Office.

These cells will be tasked with conducting

field-level assessments, coordinating relief efforts, and ensuring a rapid institutional response to emerging challenges.

In a forward-looking move, the programme also envisions the development of Model Climate Resilient VCDC (Village Council Development Committee) Units in each ADO Circle.

These units will be created through convergence with departments such as Agriculture, Irrigation, Soil Conservation, and Water Resources.

The aim is to integrate sustainable farming practices, improve irrigation infrastructure, and prepare the region's agrarian communities for long-term climate adaptation.

BTC Chief Pramod Boro, while launching the programme, reiterated his administration's commitment to farmer welfare and sustainable rural development.

"The impact of climate change is now being directly felt by our farmers. It is our duty to ensure that timely support, modern tools, and strong institutional mechanisms are in place to protect their livelihoods," he said.

The programme has been widely welcomed by agricultural stakeholders across BTR, who view it as a crucial step in both addressing immediate distress and building a resilient agricultural ecosystem capable of withstanding future climatic shocks.

## Newborn sale in Tinsukia sparks outrage Health worker arrested, constable under scrutiny in Margherita

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, Aug 2:** A shocking case of a newborn being allegedly sold for money has surfaced in Assam's Tinsukia district, prompting a swift response from the District Child Protection Department and law enforcement agencies.

The incident has led to the arrest of a health department employee, while the involvement of a police constable remains under serious investigation.

The incident dates back to July 13, when a woman—identified only by her surname Moran from Bordumsa—gave birth at the Margherita First Referral Unit (FRU) civil hospital.

In a concerning development, she absconded with the newborn shortly after delivery without obtaining formal discharge from the hospital.

The situation escalated on July 23, when the infant was allegedly handed over to a police constable named Shiju Tiwari, who is posted at the office of the Super-

tendent of Police in Tinsukia.

The handover was reportedly facilitated by Jinamoni Gohain, a health worker associated with the hospital, in exchange for a substantial cash payment.

The exact amount involved has not been disclosed.

The matter came to light on July 25, when the newborn—reported to be unwell—was brought to Tinsukia Civil Hospital for medical attention.

Medical personnel at the hospital, noting irregularities in the circumstances of the child's presentation, alerted the authorities.

The District Child Protection Department immediately intervened, took custody of the infant, and filed a formal complaint at the Tinsukia Sadar Police Station.

Following the complaint, health worker Jinamoni Gohain was arrested on Friday from the premises of Tinsukia Civil Hospital.

Authorities are now investigating whether she acted alone or as part of a larger network involved

in illegal adoption or child trafficking. The role of Constable Shiju Tiwari is also under close examination, particularly concerning his acceptance of the newborn outside any legal procedure.

Law enforcement agencies have yet to clarify whether he will face disciplinary or criminal charges, pending further inquiry.

Officials from the District Child Protection Department have raised strong concerns about the possibility of a broader trafficking nexus involving multiple personnel within the health system.

They have indicated that more arrests may follow as the investigation progresses.

The incident has sparked outrage in the region, with local residents and child rights groups demanding a thorough probe and stringent action against all individuals involved.

As of the filing of this report, the newborn remains under the care of the District Child Protection Department, and an in-depth investigation is ongoing.

## Land allotment, insurance for auto-rickshaw drivers announced at BJP joining event

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Aug 2:** Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, on Saturday announced that the KAAC would allot land and construct an office for the Diphu Auto-Rickshaw Drivers' Association.

He also declared that an insurance scheme for auto-rickshaw drivers would be introduced from the next financial year, with the KAAC bearing the cost.

The announcement was made during a mass joining programme held at the Sarsing Teron Memorial Town Hall, Matipung, where a large number of auto-rickshaw drivers from Diphu formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The event was organised by the BJP East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC).

According to party sources, over a thousand auto-rickshaw drivers, under the leadership of Saiten Enghi, pledged their support to the BJP.

They were welcomed into the party by CEM Tuliram Ronghang and BJP-EKADC president Roland Timung through the symbolic gesture of donning party caps and scarves.

Addressing the gathering, CEM Ronghang thanked the drivers for their support and stated that they had made the right choice by joining the BJP, which is in power at the

Centre, in the state, and in the KAAC. "Only the ruling party can ensure development. You have taken the right decision at the right time," he said.

The CEM further announced that the KAAC would provide insurance coverage to any driver purchasing a new auto-rickshaw from the next financial year.

He added that depending on budget availability and revenue generation, the Council may also extend up to 50 percent financial support for purchasing auto-rickshaws in the future.

On the matter of traffic congestion in Diphu market, Ronghang said that a separate parking zone for auto-rickshaws and private vehicles, including those of VIPs and VVIPs, would be developed beneath the under-construction flyover.

Once completed, entry of all vehicles into the market area will be restricted to ease congestion.

CEM Ronghang also highlighted a range of developmental projects slated for completion by December 2025.

These include the inauguration of the flyover from the East Division Forest Office at Rongnighang to the Post Office, a four-lane road from Gandhi Park to Assam University Diphu Campus via Lumding Road, and the TATA Cancer Hospital.

Additionally, the swimming pool

at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) complex and Diphu Lake will also be inaugurated.

Speaking on the protection of indigenous land rights, the CEM stated that the Land and Revenue Department of KAAC has so far distributed 7.57 lakh land pattas in rural areas, and the process would continue for eligible beneficiaries.

He also criticised All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) president JI Kathar, describing him as "half-informed" and accused him of spreading misinformation.

Ronghang urged the newly joined drivers not to be misled by such claims.

BJP-EKADC president Roland Killing welcomed the new entrants and encouraged unity within the party. He said that auto-rickshaw drivers represent the image of society and play an essential role in connecting people.

He drew comparisons with drivers in other cities, noting that Diphu's drivers were known for their polite and helpful nature.

The event was also attended by MLAs Darsing Ronghang and Bidyasing Englang, KAAC Executive Member Tilotoma Hasnu, MAC Pobitra Rongpi, and Assam Hills Small Industries Development Corporation Ltd (AHSIDC) Chairman Ratan Teron.

A similar joining programme was also held at the BJP-EKADC office.

## Assam to nominate volunteers for Independence Day celebration in Delhi

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** The Government of Assam has directed all Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) of the Territorial and Social Forestry Wings to nominate an individual as a Special Guest for the upcoming Independence Day celebration at the Red Fort in New Delhi.

According to an official instruction, the nominee must be a volunteer or worker who actively participated in the 'Ek Ped Mae Naam' campaign during 2024-25 and has demonstrated exceptional commitment in planting saplings under the initiative.

The selected nominee, chosen by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India, will attend the national celebration as a special guest. All expenses related to travel, boarding, and lodging for the selected individual will be borne by the MoEF&CC.

DFOs have been asked to submit their nominations by filling in a designated Google Sheet within two days, as per the directive issued by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force (PCCF & HoFF), Assam.

Additionally, the Chief Secretaries of respective States and Union Territories have been asked to nominate up to ten individuals, along with their spouses, who have made notable contributions to the campaign.

## Minister Brahma attends cooperative training programme

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Aug 2:** Minister for Handloom, Textile & Sericulture, Soil Conservation, and Welfare of Bodoland Department, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, on Friday attended a one-day training-cum-awareness programme held at the Golaiagon VCDC office in Baksa district.

The event, themed "Strengthening Cooperatives for Sustainable Development," was organised by the Cooperation Department of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government.

The programme is part of an ongoing initiative to promote cooperative models as a means of building resilient and self-reliant rural economies across BTR. Organisers said the department has been working consistently towards capacity building and financial empowerment of local communities through the cooperative sector.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Brahma highlighted the role of cooperatives in driving grassroots economic growth.

He stated that under the leadership of BTR Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro, a federation has been formed within the Cooperation Department to implement various schemes focused on strengthening rural economic infrastructure.

"Our aim is to increase the number of taxpayers in villages by empowering people economically," Brahma said, while urging local communities to explore the wide range of financial support available through cooperative societies, including loans, subsidies, and government assistance. The minister further informed that under the Eri Mission of BTR, the Cooperation Department is facilitating large-scale investments from the Government of India.

Referring to the ₹300-crore project at Kharuajan in Baksa, he said several entrepreneurs have already started receiving financial support under the initiative. As part of the programme, Minister Brahma also interacted with local leaders, stakeholders, and members of cooperative societies.

Certificates were distributed to participants who successfully completed training under various capacity-building modules.

The event was attended by former MLA Hitesh Basumatary, MCLA Mantu Boro, and other prominent personalities, along with officials and members of the Cooperation Department.

## Over 688 road accidents reported in Nagaon in 7 months: DC Devashish Sarma

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Aug 2:** A total of 688 road accidents have been reported in Nagaon district between January and July 31 this year, resulting in 141 deaths and 977 injuries, according to official data shared by District Commissioner Devashish Sarma at a press conference held at the DC's office on Saturday. Highlighting the concerning rise in road mishaps, the District Commissioner announced that the district administration, in collaboration with the District Road Safety Committee, will organise a road safety awareness bike rally on Sunday. The initiative is aimed at sensitising the public to traffic rules and safe driving practices.

Sarma stated that a significant number of the accidents were caused due to the non-use of helmets and incidents involving driving under the influence of alcohol. In response, the District Road Safety Committee has intensified its efforts in identifying accident-prone zones and strengthening safety measures, including the repair of potholes to reduce risks during the monsoon season. The bike rally will commence at 9:00 am from the premises of the District Commissioner's office, travel to Kaliabor via Bagori, and return to the starting point. As part of the programme, participants will also take part in a road safety awareness session at the Jakhalabandha bus stand. The District Commissioner urged citizens to participate in and support the rally to help build a culture of safe and responsible road usage.

The press conference was attended by Additional District Commissioner Sudip Nath; Member Secretary of the District Road Safety Committee and Superintendent Engineer, PWD Roads, Govind Singh; District Information and Public Relations Officer Mandira Chayengia; and members of the local press.

## Assam Govt Issues directive for strict enforcement of workplace harassment law

**HT Bureau**

**KHERONI, Aug 2:** The Government of Assam has directed all Deputy Commissioners to strictly implement the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, across all departments and institutions in the state.

According to an official order issued by the Personnel (A) Department, all government offices must constitute Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in line with the provisions of the Act. These committees are to be chaired by senior women officers, with at least 50 per cent representation of women, and must include an external member from a non-governmental organisation or an agency experienced in addressing such issues.

Reinforcing the government's policy of zero tolerance towards workplace harassment, the directive aims to ensure a safe and respectful working environment for women across sectors. It also highlights the State's continued emphasis on gender equity and employee welfare.

In Karbi Anglong, Deputy Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi has instructed all departments and institutions under the district's jurisdiction to comply with the directive. Offices have been asked to prominently display the rules, conduct awareness programmes, and establish robust grievance redressal mechanisms to ensure timely and effective resolution of complaints.

The move is part of the government's broader efforts to strengthen institutional safeguards against workplace harassment and uphold the dignity and safety of women employees in all spheres of public administration.

## Over ₹ 11 crore disbursed to over 56,000 farmers in Jorhat under PM-KISAN Scheme

**HT correspondent**

**JORHAT, Aug 2:** As many as 56,844 farmers in Jorhat district received over Rs 11 crore under the 20th instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme on Saturday. The amount was directly transferred to the beneficiaries' bank accounts during the nationwide disbursement ceremony led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, as part of PM Kisan Utsav Divas.

According to sources in the Agriculture Department, the Jorhat district beneficiaries were among the estimated 9.4 crore farmers across the country who received a cumulative disbursement of ₹ 20,500 crore under the instalment released. The PM-KISAN is a centrally funded scheme that provides ₹ 6,000 annually to eligible landholding farmers in three equal instalments of ₹ 2,000, directly credited to their bank accounts every four months.

In Jorhat, the live telecast of the Prime Minister's programme was organised at several locations, including Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Jorhat; Kaliapani; Teok

Central Jorhat Development Block; North West Jorhat Development Block; East Jorhat Development Block; East Teok Development Block; Titabor Development Block; and all Gaon Panchayat offices across the district. The events were conducted under the aegis of KVK Jorhat and the District Agriculture Department. The district-level programme was attended by District Agriculture Officer Debajit Dutta; Dr Manoj Kumar Chouhan, Senior Extension Specialist, Department of Agricultural Extension, Assam Agricultural University; Rupam Kakati, Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer and District Nodal Officer for PM-KISAN; and Trishnali Saikia, Agricultural Economics Specialist. A total of 203 participants were present at various broadcast venues, including Officer (Soil) Gitimallika Hazarika; Project Officer Vedanta Sharma; Agriculture Inspector Lalit Taid; officials and staff of the Jorhat District Agriculture Department and Agricultural Science Centre; directors of Common Service Centres; and progressive farmers from Teok, Nakachari, and Selenghat Agricultural Development Circles.

## Sampoornata Sainiks felicitated in Dima Hasao for transformative grassroots work

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 2:** The District Administration of Dima Hasao on Saturday held a special award ceremony to recognise the commitment and performance of district and block officials, along with frontline workers, for their contributions under the Sampoornata Abhiyaan — a flagship initiative under NITI Aayog's Aspirational Block Programme.

The event, titled Sampoornata Abhiyaan Samman Samaroh, was held at the NL Daulaguphu Auditorium of Haflong Government College.

According to an official statement issued by the district administration, the ceremony aimed to acknowledge the significant efforts made towards achieving saturation in key development indicators across the district's aspirational blocks.

Highlighting the relevance of the Aspirational Block Programme, Deputy Commissioner Munindra Nath Ngatey called upon all stakeholders to treat the district's inclusion among aspirational blocks not as a mat-



ter of prestige, but as an urgent call to action.

"Being identified as an aspirational block is not a badge of honour. It is a reminder that transformation is required — and possible — through sustained and focused efforts,"

he said.

Ngatey also stressed that the knowledge and experience gained in achieving progress under key indicators must now be channelled into accelerating development in lagging sectors.

"One must put shoulders to the wheel and work diligently to ensure that the name of the district is listed out of aspirational blocks," he added.

The Aspirational Block Programme covers 500 blocks across 27 States and 4 Union Territories and aims to drive improvements across six core thematic areas — Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure.

Dima Hasao has four such blocks: Diyung Valley, Diyungbra, Jatinga Valley, and New Sangbar.

In line with the development mission and to promote local enterprise, the district administration also launched Akanksha Haat, a weeklong event scheduled from August 2 to 8.

The haat has been set up in the parking area near the Tularam Amphitheatre and features a vibrant exhibition and sale of local goods produced by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) from all four aspirational blocks.

The initiative not only aims to create market access for indigenous products but also to highlight the creative and entrepreneurial potential of rural communities in the district.

The exhibition is open to both residents and visitors, offering a unique opportunity to purchase authentic handcrafted items and locally grown produce.

The inaugural meeting of the programme saw the participation of several senior officials, including Principal Secretary of North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Partha Jahari, Additional Deputy Commissioners, and department representatives from various line departments.

The event underscored the administration's focus on evidence-based governance and accountability, while promoting collaborative, community-driven development.

## Sarba meets Dr Nagen Saikia

**HT Bureau**

**DIBRUGARH, Aug 2:** Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday visited the residence of eminent scholar, litterateur and thinker Dr Nagen Saikia in Dibrugarh to enquire about his well-being and engage in a meaningful exchange on a range of subjects. During the meeting, Sonowal extended his wishes for Dr Saikia's good health and long life.

"The philosophy and invaluable contributions of Dr Nagen Saikia have enriched national life and continue to inspire the younger generation. It was a privilege to meet him, seek his blessings, and benefit from his wise counsel. His words have been truly inspiring," the Union Minister said.

## Sangrami Sena, Asom seeks action against encroachments on historic water bodies

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, Aug 2:** Youth organisation Sangrami Sena, Asom staged a demonstration today demanding immediate legal action against encroachments on several historic water bodies and drainage channels in Sivasagar, alleging serious ecological and heritage damage.

The organisation highlighted the deteriorating condition of the Jamuna canal, originally excavated by Bor Raja Draupadi over three centuries ago. The canal, which flows around the Sivasagar Borpuhuri, is reportedly encroached at multiple points, particularly in the Station Chariali area.

The organisation further alleged that the Moribael, a natural reservoir that traditionally absorbed excess rainwater in the town, has been significantly reduced due to encroachments stretching from Chiring Chapori to Amolapaty.



# The Tsunami that Shook Kamchatka

By: Satyabrata Borah

A tsunami is a natural disaster of immense power, a phenomenon that reminds humanity of nature's untamed strength. The term "tsunami" comes from the Japanese words "tsu" (harbor) and "nami" (wave), reflecting its devastating impact on coastal regions. Unlike ordinary ocean waves driven by wind, tsunamis are caused by massive disruptions in the ocean, most commonly underwater earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, or landslides. These events displace enormous volumes of water, creating waves that can travel across entire oceans at speeds of up to 500-800 kilometers per hour. In deep water, these waves may go unnoticed, barely rising above a meter. But as they approach shallower coastal waters, their speed slows, and their height surges, sometimes reaching over 30 meters, capable of obliterating everything in their path.

The primary cause of a tsunami lies in the restless movement of the Earth's tectonic plates. The planet's crust is divided into several large plates that float on a semi-fluid layer beneath. When these plates shift or collide, especially under the ocean, they can trigger earthquakes. If the quake is strong enough, it can displace the ocean floor, pushing water upward and outward in a ripple effect that becomes a tsunami. While earthquakes are the most common trigger, volcanic eruptions, like the 1883 Krakatoa explosion, or massive landslides can also unleash these destructive waves. In rare cases, even meteorite impacts have been known to cause tsunamis. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed over 230,000 people across 14 countries, was triggered by a 9.1-magnitude underwater earthquake, a stark reminder of the scale of devastation these events can cause.

Recently, in mid-July 2025, Russia's far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula bore the brunt of a catastrophic tsunami, drawing global attention to the raw power of nature. The disaster was sparked by an 8.3-magnitude earthquake beneath the Pacific Ocean, near the Kuril-Kamchatka Trench, a seismically active zone. The quake caused a massive displacement of water, sending waves racing toward the coast. Within minutes, the Russian authorities issued tsunami warnings, but the region's remoteness and patchy communication networks meant that many residents received the alerts too late or not at all. The waves struck with terrifying force, reshaping the landscape and leaving a trail of destruction that will take years to rebuild.

The Kamchatka Peninsula, a rugged and sparsely populated region, is no stranger to seismic activity, but the scale of this tsunami was unprecedented in recent memory. In coastal villages

and towns like Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the largest city in the region, the waves reached heights of over 15 meters in some areas. Entire neighborhoods were swept away as the water surged inland, carrying debris, vehicles, and even fishing boats far from the shore. Homes, schools, and hospitals crumbled under the onslaught, their concrete walls no match for the relentless force of the sea. Power lines were ripped apart, leaving entire communities without electricity or clean water. Roads were buried under piles of rubble, twisted metal, and uprooted trees, making rescue efforts a logistical nightmare.

The human toll was staggering. Initial reports estimated thousands of deaths, with many more missing, their fates uncertain as rescue teams combed through the wreckage. Families were torn apart, with survivors left to wander through the ruins, searching for loved ones. Eyewitness accounts painted a harrowing picture: the deafening roar of the approaching waves, the ground trembling beneath their feet, and the sight of water swallowing everything in its path. One resident described how the sea seemed to "rise like a wall," crashing through their village with such force that it felt like the end of the world. For the elderly, children, and the sick, the disaster was particularly cruel, as they struggled to escape the fast-moving waters.

Rescue operations began almost immediately, but the scale of the devastation posed immense challenges. Emergency teams, hampered by blocked roads and damaged infrastructure, worked tirelessly to pull survivors from the debris. Helicopters buzzed overhead, delivering supplies and airlifting the injured to safety. Yet, the remoteness of many affected areas meant that aid was slow to reach those in need. International organizations and neighboring countries, including Japan and the United States, pledged support, sending medical teams, food, and temporary shelters. But the sheer scale of the disaster overwhelmed local authorities, and the lack of communication infrastructure in rural areas complicated efforts to coordinate relief.

The aftermath of the tsunami revealed a landscape transformed by destruction. Coastal villages that once thrived on fishing and tourism were reduced to rubble. Boats that had been the livelihood of generations of fishermen were now scattered across fields, some lodged in trees or atop buildings. The environmental impact was equally severe. Oil and chemical spills from damaged infrastructure contaminated the waters, threatening marine life in a region known for its rich biodiversity. Kamchatka's fishing industry, a cornerstone of the local economy, faced collapse as processing plants and harbors were destroyed. The tourism sector, which drew visitors



to the peninsula's volcanic landscapes and pristine beaches, also suffered a devastating blow, with many resorts and guesthouses wiped out.

Beyond the immediate physical damage, the tsunami left deep emotional scars. Survivors spoke of the trauma of losing homes, livelihoods, and loved ones in a matter of minutes. Children who witnessed the destruction were left in shock, clinging to parents or volunteers as they tried to make sense of the chaos. Community centers, where available, became makeshift shelters, filled with the sounds of grief and resilience as people shared stories of survival. The psychological toll will likely linger for years, requiring long-term support that goes beyond rebuilding homes and roads.

The economic ripple effects of the tsunami extended far beyond Kamchatka. The disruption of the fishing industry affected global seafood markets, as Russia is a major supplier of fish and crab. The environmental damage raised concerns about the long-term health of the Pacific ecosystem, with scientists warning of cascading effects on marine species and food chains. Rebuilding efforts will require billions of dollars and years

of work, straining Russia's resources at a time when global economic pressures are already high. The government has promised swift action, but the scale of the task is daunting, particularly in a region where infrastructure was already limited.

This disaster also serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of preparedness. While modern technology has improved our ability to predict tsunamis, delivering warnings to remote areas remains a challenge. Systems like deep-ocean buoys and seismic monitors can detect the early signs of a tsunami, but without robust communication networks, these warnings are useless. In Kamchatka, the delay in reaching rural communities cost lives. The tragedy has sparked renewed calls for investment in early warning systems, not just in Russia but in all tsunami-prone regions. Countries like Japan, which has a sophisticated alert system, offer a model for how technology and community preparedness can save lives.

The Kamchatka tsunami is a stark illustration of humanity's vulnerability in the face of nature's fury. It underscores the need for global coopera-

tion in addressing natural disasters, from improving early warning systems to mitigating the environmental factors that exacerbate their impact. Climate change, for instance, is raising sea levels and intensifying the risks of coastal flooding, making tsunamis even more dangerous. Protecting ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs, which act as natural barriers, is another critical step in reducing vulnerability.

As the people of Kamchatka begin the long process of rebuilding, their resilience shines through. Communities are coming together, sharing resources and stories of hope amid the devastation. The international response, while slow in some areas, reflects a shared recognition of the need to support those in crisis. Yet, the tsunami is a humbling reminder that no amount of human ingenuity can fully tame nature. It calls on us to live in harmony with our planet, to respect its power, and to prepare as best we can for its unpredictable outbursts. For the people of Kamchatka, and for the world watching, this disaster is a call to action, to build smarter, to care for the environment, and to cherish the fragile beauty of life on Earth.

## The crisis in Assamese society and the search for new directions

By: Tuwaram Dutta

Assamese society has been undergoing a significant transformation in recent times. This change has opened pathways to progress in certain areas, such as education, technology, and economic opportunities. However, alongside these advancements, an invisible chaos has struck deep at the core ethical foundations and social unity of our society. The bonds of family, affectionate relationships with neighbors, and a sense of responsibility toward the community—once the foundational pillars of our society—are now being replaced by a cold wave of individualism. This article delves deeply into the root causes of this social crisis and explores in detail the pathways to building a healthy, united society.

Historically, Assamese society placed the highest priority on the welfare of family and community. In villages, people extended a helping hand with empathy during times of hardship, and decisions were made with the collective well-being in mind. However, today, the sense of "we" has been overtaken by the notion of "I," giving rise to a new crisis. In the pursuit of personal happiness, career, and independence, we have lost connection with our roots. This disconnection is particularly evident in metropolitan areas like Guwahati. Under the pretext of busyness, people no longer have time to share a cup of tea with their parents or visit neighbors to check on their well-being. This emotional distance is steadily weakening the human relationships that once defined our society.

This transformation has also created a void within families. In earlier times, family members spent time together, discussing each other's problems and finding solutions collectively. However, in today's fast-paced life, this tradition has faded. The communication gap between working parents and children busy with school and coaching classes has led to misunderstandings, mental unrest, and emotional distance. This sense of disconnection is more pronounced in urban families, where marital disputes and a lack of communication between parents and children have shaken the very foundation of family life.

At the heart of this transformation lies the profound impact of globalization. Globalization has connected us to the world, bring-



ing unprecedented advancements in education, technology, and economic opportunities. Our youth are showcasing their talents on global platforms, contributing to Assam's pride. However, alongside these benefits, globalization has introduced the influence of Western consumerist lifestyles into our society. The race for expensive cars, smartphones, and branded clothing has created a sense of restlessness in our minds. The more we acquire, the more we desire, leading to dissatisfaction that robs us of mental peace and sows the seeds of alienation in society.

Caught in the trap of consumerism, we have drifted away from our ethical values. In the past, honesty, compassion, and cooperation guided our society. Today, however, the pursuit of wealth, power, and social status has pushed these values to the background. Society's respect for the wealthy has grown, while its regard for honest and simple individuals has narrowed. As a result, we have become engrossed in a race to amass wealth by any means, rendering the distinction between right and wrong seemingly irrelevant. This moral decline has led to an increase in crimes such as theft, fraud, and violence, a trend particularly noticeable in metropolitan areas like Guwahati.

The excessive use of social media has further complicated these issues. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have connected us to the world but have distanced us from real-life relationships. Immersed in the virtual world, we have forgotten the importance of spending time with family and neighbors. This digital disconnection has created a void in our society. Young people, in their pursuit of social validation through likes and comments on social media, are chasing virtual recognition while experiencing a lack of peace and satisfaction in their real lives.

To overcome this social crisis, we must work collectively. First and foremost, our education system needs to prioritize ethical ed-

ucation. Teaching students not only academic knowledge but also values like honesty, empathy, and collective responsibility will enable them to apply these principles in their lives. Educational institutions should incorporate topics on ethics and social responsibility into their curricula.

Secondly, we must foster communication and cooperation within families. Family members should revive the habit of spending time together and addressing each other's problems. For example, engaging in conversations during meals can strengthen familial bonds. At the community level, organizing social activities such as cultural programs or community service initiatives can foster a sense of unity. In villages, community-based activities can help rekindle the spirit of togetherness.

Thirdly, to counter the influence of consumerism, we must emphasize the promotion of our traditional culture. The beauty of Assamese culture—manifested in events like Bihu, Naam-Kirtan, and traditional festivals—should be celebrated to raise awareness. We must encourage reducing excessive social media use and prioritize building real-life relationships with family and neighbors. For instance, limiting social media usage and spending more time with loved ones can become a healthy habit.

Assamese society stands at a critical juncture. The negative impacts of individualism, consumerism, and globalization have struck deep at our ethical foundations and social unity. Yet, amidst this crisis, there is a glimmer of hope. By promoting ethical education, fostering closer family ties, and taking pride in our cultural heritage, we can realize the dream of a healthy society. This journey requires the cooperation of every Assamese individual. If we remain mindful of our traditional values and move toward social unity, we can guide our society back to its glorious past. Let us come together to transform this vision of a new beginning into reality.

## Bangladesh's Youthquake and the Birth of a New Order

By: Dipak Kurmi

August 5 marks a full year since the political landscape of Bangladesh underwent one of its most dramatic upheavals in recent memory. The fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League (AL) government, which had governed the country with a firm grip since 2009, represented not just a change in leadership, but the collapse of a political order that had long dominated Bangladeshi life. The ensuing period has seen a technocratic and student-supported interim administration led by Muhammad Yunus, thrust into power after weeks of unrelenting protests by the youth and students. While many expected this arrangement to be short-lived, it has endured for a full year with surprising resilience, hinting at deeper undercurrents shaping Bangladesh's future.

The immediate catalyst for the nationwide revolt was the government's reinstatement of a 30 per cent job reservation for the descendants of "freedom fighters", following a High Court order that overturned Hasina's 2018 decision to scrap the quota. Combined with existing reservations, this policy brought the total quota to a staggering 56 per cent in government jobs, sparking outrage in a country grappling with high youth unemployment. To the younger generation—unburdened by the legacy politics of the Liberation War—the policy represented institutionalized inequality. The resulting agitation that began in Dhaka's public universities quickly spread to Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar, and Chittagong, eventually engulfing private universities and madrasas. It was not just an issue of jobs anymore; it had become a movement questioning the very legitimacy of Hasina's rule.

Hasina's response to the protests was not tempered by political foresight. Instead of offering dialogue or reconciliation, her government resorted to force. Matters escalated on July 14, 2024, when she made a provocative statement during a press conference, rhetorically asking whether the grandchildren of Razakars—the collaborators with Pakistan during the 1971 war—should benefit instead of the grandchildren of freedom fighters. This deeply polarising remark equated protesting students with historical traitors, inflaming ten-

sions further. The consequence was the coalescing of disparate groups, including students from madrasas and the long-suppressed Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

The re-emergence of Jamaat, which had been banned in 2013 by the Supreme Court and faced fierce repression under Hasina's government, signified a critical turning point in the protest movement. Though initially a marginal presence in the political theatre of post-2009 Bangladesh, Jamaat capitalised on the growing vacuum and public anger. While the movement had been largely apolitical in its origins, Jamaat's entry provided it with organisational muscle and ideological direction, albeit controversial. The Hasina government's decision to ban the party again on August 1, 2024, proved too little, too late. The movement had already outgrown the state's ability to suppress it.

Muhammad Yunus, once renowned for his work in microfinance and poverty alleviation, emerged as an unlikely political steward in this vacuum. With the support of student leaders, former bureaucrats, and sections of civil society, Yunus assumed the role of chief adviser in an interim, non-elected government. While many speculated about foreign influence in the initial days of the new regime, its survival for over a year without major resistance points to more profound shifts in Bangladesh's socio-political fabric.

What is perhaps most striking is the absence of meaningful opposition from the two dominant parties that had shaped the last three decades—AL and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Despite their deeply entrenched networks among youth, women, farmers, and industrial workers, neither party has mounted an effective campaign against Yunus's administration. The AL, in particular, has been neutered by the recent UN Human Rights Commissioner's damning "fact-finding report" published in May 2025. The report accused Hasina's regime of human rights violations during the 2024 protests, including the deaths of over 1,400 civilians—many of them students—not only at the hands of police but also by members of the AL's own youth and student wings. This document provided the legal and moral pretext for banning the AL from political activity, ensuring its exclusion

from upcoming elections and opening the political space to new entrants.

In the meantime, BNP remains the most formidable political organisation left standing, but its path forward is uncertain. While it may benefit from the AL's absence, it also risks being overshadowed by emerging forces such as the students and the revitalised Jamaat. This fluidity resembles other transitions in South Asia, such as the youth-led movements that reshaped Sri Lanka's politics in the wake of its economic collapse, or Pakistan's periodic flirtations with populist upstarts who promise systemic reform. South Asia, once dominated by family-led political dynasties, appears to be moving into a new phase characterised by youth mobilisation, digital activism, and rising demands for accountability.

The endurance of the Yunus-led administration is thus emblematic of this transformation. What was conceived as a temporary fix to restore calm has matured into a functional caretaker regime. Reports now indicate that elections will be held in February 2026, marking the formal end of the interregnum and ushering in a new democratic phase. But what form that democracy takes—and which players will dominate—remains an open question. Will the BNP stage a comeback? Will the students institutionalise their activism into a political party? Will Jamaat's re-entry change the secular contours of Bangladesh's polity? These are questions to which there are no definitive answers yet.

India, watching from across the border, has so far maintained a studious silence. While speculation abounds regarding India's initial role or interest in the post-Hasina transition, its long-term stance has been consistently measured. As the region's most robust and established democracy, India has preferred to act not as an interventionist force but as a stabilising presence, promoting democratic values and processes. The current moment in Bangladesh demands precisely that—quiet diplomacy, support for electoral integrity, and respect for the choices made by the people of Bangladesh.

At a broader level, the events of the past year have revealed an uncomfortable truth for long-serving political leaders across the developing world: legitimacy must be constantly renewed. Hasina's government, once hailed for economic growth and infrastructure development, failed to listen to the very demographic that had the most at stake—its youth. Her inability to read the signs, mismanagement of a sensitive quota issue, and arrogant dismissal of student voices sealed her downfall. The future of Bangladesh now hinges on how this interregnum is managed in the months ahead. If Yunus can deliver a free and fair election, his legacy may be secured not as a technocrat-turned-ruler, but as a transitional figure who shepherded the country from autocratic decay to democratic renewal. Conversely, if the political process is manipulated, or if extremist groups like Jamaat dominate the post-election space, the fragile gains of this period may be lost.

In either case, what unfolds in Dhaka will hold lessons not only for Bangladesh but for every democracy grappling with generational change, institutional trust, and political accountability. The fall of Hasina's government was not just the end of a regime; it may well be the beginning of Bangladesh's political reimagining. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmi@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmi@gmail.com))





# The two faces of Jyotiprasad Agarwala's dramatic genius

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwala stands as one of the most remarkable pioneers in the cultural and literary history of Assam during the 20th century. In his short but impactful life, he created an extraordinary legacy as a poet, playwright, filmmaker, composer, and artist. Among all his creative works, his plays hold a special place because through them he conveyed his clear and original vision of life, society, and human nature. His plays are not mere stories but expressions of deep human emotions and conflicts, wrapped in artistic beauty and a strong sense of cultural identity.

One of Jyotiprasad's finest works is the play Rupalim, written in 1936 and staged in 1937 at Tezpur's Ban Theatre. This play is unique in Assamese literature for its rich character portrayal, complex themes, and dramatic intensity. Unlike many plays that lean on mythology or historical events, Rupalim presents an original story set in the fictional society of the Rukmi tribe, located on the eastern frontier. The story revolves around the young lovers Rupalim and Mayab, but it is far from a simple love tale. It explores themes of love, sacrifice, jealousy, patriotism, and tragedy.

The heroine, Rupalim, is a simple tribal girl, innocent and full of love. She embodies both youthful romance and maternal tenderness, showing her affection for her lover Mayab and a deep desire to care for her elder sister's child. Her love is pure and straightforward, marked by a childlike simplicity that makes her character touching and relatable. Yet, the world around her is harsh and unforgiving. Despite her innocence, Rupalim faces tremendous challenges, including abduction by Manimugdha, the ruler of a neighboring kingdom, who is captivated by her beauty. This tragic event sets in motion a series of hardships that ultimately lead to her horrifying death.

Rupalim's tragedy is unlike typical ones where the hero or heroine's flaws cause their downfall. Instead, she is a victim of external forces—jealousy, lust, and societal misunderstanding. When Manimugdha captures her and threatens her loved ones, Rupalim agrees to sacrifice her chastity to save her people and fa-

ther. This selfless act reveals her immense courage and love for her tribe. Yet, after her release, the very people she saved accuse her of dishonor, unable to believe in her purity. Her father himself condemns her, and finally, Itiven, a central female character and sister to the Rukmi king, burns Rupalim alive out of jealousy and misunderstanding.

Itiven is a powerful and complex character. She starts as a strong, patriotic woman who refuses to tolerate injustice. Unlike the weak Rukmi king, who does nothing about Manimugdha's crimes, Itiven speaks boldly to her tribe, urging them to rise in defense of their honor and heritage. She rejects marrying a man who behaves immorally despite being betrothed to her. In this role, she represents courage, righteousness, and fiery patriotism. Her speeches awaken the spirit of resistance among her people and inspire them to fight back against oppression.

However, Itiven's character undergoes a dramatic transformation as the play progresses. The noble and revolutionary spirit she displays early on fades under the weight of jealousy and personal pain. Unable to accept Rupalim's closeness with Manimugdha, Itiven's love turns into envy and cruelty. Despite her initial idealism, she becomes the agent of Rupalim's destruction. Itiven's character arc shows the complexity of human nature, where virtues like patriotism and courage can coexist with darker feelings such as jealousy and vengeance. The contrast between Rupalim and Itiven forms the emotional core of the play. Rupalim's simplicity, purity, and self-sacrifice are set against Itiven's fiery spirit and eventual moral decline. Both women embody different aspects of womanhood—Rupalim as the embodiment of innocence and love, and Itiven as the symbol of resistance and jealousy. Their tragic interaction highlights the harsh realities faced by women in society, where even acts of sacrifice and courage are met with suspicion and cruelty.

Manimugdha, the male antagonist, is equally complex. Initially portrayed as a lustful and powerful ruler, he undergoes a transformation influenced by Rupalim's purity and sacrifice. His character shifts from that of a tyrant to a man who seeks forgiveness and



shows nobility by honoring Rupalim after her ordeal. This change underscores the play's theme that love and purity can redeem even the darkest hearts.

The story of Rupalim also reflects Jyotiprasad Agarwala's originality and creativity in drama. Though he acknowledged that Maurice Maeterlinck's play Monna Vanna may have influenced him, Jyotiprasad's Rupalim goes beyond inspiration to create something distinctly Assamese and original. Unlike Monna Vanna, Jyotiprasad split the central character into two—Rupalim and Itiven—allowing a richer exploration of conflicting female roles and emotions. This creative choice highlights his deep understanding of human psychology and social dynamics.

The play's structure is tight and compelling, divided into seven acts with continuous dramatic tension. It balances lyrical beauty, dramatic conflict, and tragic elements, holding the audience's attention from beginning to end. The story does not slow down, and the intensity builds as the characters face moral dilemmas, love, betrayal, and sacrifice. Through the diverse characters, Jyotiprasad paints a vivid



picture of a society grappling with justice, honor, and human frailty.

What makes Rupalim truly exceptional is how it reveals the complexity of life and human nature. It does not offer simple heroes or villains but presents people shaped by their circumstances, emotions, and choices. The tragedy arises not from personal flaws alone but from the interplay of fate, societal norms, and human passions. The play's conclusion, with Rupalim's death by fire at the hands of Itiven, leaves the audience with a powerful sense of sorrow and reflection on injustice and sacrifice.

Jyotiprasad's portrayal of women in his plays deserves special mention. Female characters in his works, including Rupalim, Itiven, Usha, Shewali, and Nimati Kaina, often represent patience, strength, and the divine light of womanhood. In Rupalim, these qualities shine through the heroine's silent beauty and noble sacrifice as well as through Itiven's fiery spirit and tragic jealousy. These characters are not one-dimensional but display the full range of human emotions and conflicts.

In Assamese literature and drama, Rupalim

stands out as a masterpiece that combines artistic beauty with deep human insight. Jyotiprasad Agarwala's vision in crafting a story that speaks about love, honor, patriotism, and sacrifice continues to resonate with audiences. The play invites us to consider the costs of societal prejudice and the courage required to face injustice.

The story of Rupalim is tragic but also inspiring. It tells of a woman who loves deeply, sacrifices greatly, and remains pure despite cruel misunderstandings. Itiven's story reminds us how even the strongest hearts can falter under the weight of jealousy and pain. Together, these two characters symbolize the duality of human nature, the light and shadow that coexist within us all.

Jyotiprasad Agarwala's Rupalim is more than just a play; it is a profound exploration of the human soul and the complexities of life. It stands as a testimony to his genius as a playwright and his deep empathy for humanity. Even today, decades after it was written, Rupalim continues to move and inspire, securing its place as one of the greatest works in Assamese drama and world literature.

## Short Story Resilience



By: Meenakshi Gogoi

It was the seasonal monsoon rain with ravaging floods again that had devastated lives and property in the Konwersuk village of Assam. The village people had been experiencing monsoon floods yearly, and thus they became used to nature's fury. They would wait for the NDRF flood rescue teams and the temporary shelters the NGOs and state government provided to safeguard their lives from the deadly flood. At the outset of the flooding, Prabha, a young widow and a mother, had already packed some worn-out clothes, necessary things and a bag filled with some rice, potatoes, pulses, and black grams as food for her children to be taken along to the temporary shelter, when the rescue teams would arrive to take her and her children. Prabha's son, Raju, packed his and his sister Gitu's school books, copies, colour pencils, and one drawing book in his school bag. Gitu helped her mother put everything in a jute sack and placed it on their wooden bed, whose legs were half-submerged in water. It was the third day of flooding, and luckily, their house had not been fully submerged. But after a few hours, their bamboo-cement-plastered house would be filled with flood waters. They sat on their hard, broad wooden bed with the packed things and waited for the flood rescue team to come and save their lives before they drowned.

Prabha and her children managed their lives inside their house for the last two days. At night, to keep her children's spirits unbroken from the flood, Prabha encouraged them by saying, "These are testing times. You both pray to God to help and protect us. Be fearless." She fed her children roasted black gram sand puffed rice to satisfy their hunger. They desperately waited for the flood rescue team to take them to a safe new shelter.

As they were waiting for the flood rescue team on the third day morning, Gitu asked, "Maa, why is the rescue team delaying reaching our home? I saw a boat carrying Niva and her family yesterday. I shouted and waved at her from a distance. But she didn't hear. Perhaps she had not seen me. I wish we had a boat. We could have

gone from here, too." Prabha replied, "Gitu, many people are affected by the flood. The rescue team must have reached and helped the most affected people in nearby villages. It takes time to reach the interiors and the not-so-affected places. I am hopeful they will soon reach us." Prabha further said, "Your father used to have a wooden boat. But he sold it for want of money. Don't worry. We will not be drowned."

After sometime, with a tender voice, Raju said, "Maa, I wish the black grams were not roasted but sprouted. I want to eat the sprouted grams and biscuits, and I want to drink hot milk. I am tired of eating grams and waiting here." Prabha smiled at Raju's innocent talks and said, "I will feed you sprouted grams, milk, and biscuits once we reach the flood rehabilitation camp." She asked Raju to drink a little water and eat a piece of jaggery. Prabha said, "It will make your mouth sweet. You will feel good, dear." Raju did not question much, ate a small piece of jaggery, and drank water.

After sometime, the NDRF flood rescue team finally arrived, and they were lifted on a big boat. With moist eyes, Prabha and her children had left their house. They prayed to see the house again after the flooding receded. The boat lifted two more families, and it carefully crossed the broken tree trunks, floating dead animal bodies, shattered houses, damaged bullock carts, and washed away crop fields. Prabha and her children were in pain to see the heavy damage caused to lives and property due to the ravaging flood. They reached the flood rehabilitation camp, and soon, the boat left to bring more flood-affected families. The camp was almost crowded on one side of an old, dilapidated government hospital campus. There were a few state government officials, NGO members, and visiting doctors who checked on newborns, lactating mothers, and older people. They spotted the muddy ground and the small temporary kitchen in one corner, where some local village people helped each other cook food. The state government and an NGO named 'Sarothi' provided the groceries and other necessities. Prabha collected two small

packets of Horlicks biscuits and three cups of black tea for her and her children, which were distributed in the camp. Raju reluctantly finished the black tea. They sat in one corner and watched the old and young, married and unmarried girls and women, old and pregnant women, men and children, who looked gloomy, anxious, helpless, and devastated by the swelling flood. Prabha remembered one such monsoon flood havoc when her husband was alive. He died a few years ago in a bus accident while coming from a village fair. Gitu and Raju missed their father watching other children's father's hugging and caressing their children. Some of them had clanged their children in their bosoms and patted them softly to make them fall asleep. In the meantime, Gitu and Raju saw the NGO donating clothes to children and older people. Raju picked a pair of T-shirts and pants, and Gitu picked a worn-out but beautiful flower-printed long dress. They collected a donated handloom-weaved saree for their mother.

Prabha was calm and sat quietly, hoping to get monetary help from the state government if their house was washed away. Her mind was troubled with thoughts about renovating their house again after the flood receded. After her spouse's demise, she ran their family's eatery, which served vegetarian and non-vegetarian food thalis for lunch and dinner, along with tea and local sweets, at their small town market. It was the means of livelihood at the outskirts of the village. Though not very economically sound, Prabha slowly gained a foothold in earning daily money to look after her house expenses. She knew only she would look after her children and the house, and had not lost her courage and willpower to do so. At heart, she would memorize every day, saying to herself, "I am a mother. I am alive and have to be strong for my children."

Meanwhile, Raju came to her and handed her the saree. Prabha's eyes were a little moist, and she smilingly said, "Where did you get the saree?" Raju replied, "Maa, the NGO people were distributing clothes. I collected one saree for you. Hope you like it." Prabha nodded and was happy to see Raju's love and care for her. She softly caressed Raju's hair, and they exchanged a warm hug. Gitu brought one small cup of black tea for her mother. It was comforting for Prabha to see her children affectionate and caring for her. All her worries were gone to see her children beside her. She knew her motherly strength would fight against any havoc to protect her children. With new hopes and smiles, Prabha and her children talked about things to be done once they were out of the camp. They had accepted nature's fury and waited to rebuild their lives again once the flooding receded.

## Antonio At-ma: A visionary Global Cultural leader from Philippines

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

A Visionary Dreamer, A Global Inspiration brilliant Speaker and profound writer, Antonio Ma-at known to many as "Your fellow dreamer," is a true embodiment of creativity, heart, and global unity. His journey as a writer, mentor, and cultural bridge is nothing short of inspiring touching lives through powerful words, meaningful collaborations, and unwavering dedication to the literary world. Antonio feels humbled to walk alongside journalists, cyber-journalists, and active citizens who embody the spirit of solidarity and civic responsibility. He said, "Together, we are cultivating stories that matter and building bridges across communities and cultures - not just in Greece, but across the globe."

From his heartfelt anthologies to initiatives that empower writers and celebrate motherhood, Antonio uplifts communities with grace and compassion. His presence in prestigious global platforms and recognition as one of the Top Ten Contemporary Authors reflect not only his talent but also his deep-rooted passion for inspiring. Artisan Film Production is deeply honored and proud to work alongside Antonio Bernard Ma-at as affiliation to the company. His artistry, wisdom, and dedication mirror the values the world stands for, and all are truly excited for the many projects undertaken by him each moment. Together he promises to spark creativity, amplify voices, and continue building platforms where stories can change the world. Here's to a future filled with more art, collaboration, and shared dreams. He would gracefully like to express his deepest gratitude to Hellenic Media Group, led by President Dimitris Kannavos, for the honor of having him on board. It is truly inspiring to be part of such a dedicated volunteer-based media and information network, built on the powerful mission of promoting culture, volunteerism, and social cohesion. Hellenic Media Group, through its unwavering commitment to supporting creative industries, cultural events, international film festivals, and volunteer initiatives, continues to shine a light on the best of what humanity can offer — unity, purpose, and positive action. Antonio gave a clarion call, "Let us continue our shared mission to uplift, inspire, and connect the world through the power of media and volunteerism."

Antonio Bernard Ma-at, Vice President of Legacy Crown Corporation, is a man whose work transcends borders, cultures, and artistic boundaries. Known affectionately as "Your Fellow Dreamer," Antonio has earned recognition as a globally celebrated author, lecturer,



musician, and philanthropist. His literary career is marked by a passion for blending diverse cultural influences, enriching the world of literature with each word he writes.

He is a multifaceted literary leader. Antonio's literary accomplishments are nothing short of extraordinary. As a co-author of over 100 anthologies, he has contributed significantly to the global literary landscape, providing voice and space for countless writers worldwide. His most notable project, "Mothers of the World," is a tribute to the resilience and triumphs of mothers across the globe, showcasing the stories of perseverance, love, and empowerment that shape communities. The project highlights not only personal victories but also the strength of collective spirit, affirming his belief in the importance of empowering communities through art. As the director of international literary competitions such as POP-MAPP, Antonio has helped to nurture new generations of writers, encouraging them to explore their creativity and to amplify their voices on the world stage. His efforts extend beyond the written word, as he passionately engages with the literary community through teaching and mentorship. He serves as the Executive Director of the Writers Global Movement in the Philippines, guiding aspiring authors and supporting the growth of a thriving literary culture. In addition, Antonio co-founded the New Leaf Writing Community and administers initiatives like Passion of Poetry and Filipino Poets in Blossoms, cultivating a vibrant, dynamic network of over 156,000 literary enthusiasts and aspiring authors worldwide. These platforms foster creativity, provide inspiration, and offer support to writers as they hone their craft.

Antonio can be called a Renaissance Man of Artistry and his literary prowess is at the core of his global influence, his talents extend far beyond writing. A gifted musician and public speaker, Antonio embodies the renaissance spirit, effortlessly shifting between roles that combine artistic vision with leadership. His musical pursuits further enrich his diverse contributions to the world of art, reflecting his belief in the power of creative expression to unite people across different disciplines and cultures. Antonio's global reach and artistic excellence have earned him several prestigious accolades. In 2024, he was honored with the Man of the Year award at the LMA Awards and received the title of International Journalist of the Year at the Asian Pacific Lumina Awards. His literary achievements were also celebrated at Ganka 2024, where he was awarded the Literary Achievement Award, marking yet another milestone in his illustrious career. Antonio's influence continues to grow, as he has been featured in prominent magazines and even displayed on billboards, solidifying his role as a key figure in global culture and literature. His contributions to international events, including Asia's Icon Golden Awards and Asia's Humanitarian Award ceremonies, showcase his commitment to blending artistic achievement with social impact. Antonio's journey is one of un-

wavering dedication, shaping the cultural conversation through art, writing, and community engagement. He is committed to the expansion of horizons with the Academy of Farsala. Antonio Ma-at is studying Philosophy in Literature and is now contributing to the Philosophy of Spring project at the Academy of Farsala in Greece, where he collaborates with philosophers on intellectual pursuits that deepen our understanding of nature, life, and renewal. The Philosophy of Spring 2024 Collection, which

he is curating, will be showcased at the esteemed institution under the direction of Yannis Fikas. This collection delves into the essence of spring, exploring themes of transformation, rebirth, and natural beauty through various art forms. Some pieces from this upcoming collection include: Ephemeral Echoes, The Forest Hush, Oh Noble Moth, Ethereal Zephyr, Nature's Premonition, Blades of Grass, Metamorphoses, The Turquoise Vessel, and Golden Leaves Each artwork reflects Antonio's artistic vision and his deep connection to nature's rhythms and philosophical musings on change. This collaboration with the Academy of Farsala marks another step in his mission to integrate cultural, philosophical, and artistic influences into his work. Through his work as a writer, speaker, musician, and mentor, Amb. Antonio Bernard Ma-at has proven that art is not only a form of expression but a vehicle for change. His literary projects, educational initiatives, and cultural contributions inspire others to embrace their own dreams and follow their creative passions. Antonio's influence stretches far beyond the page, reaching into the hearts and minds of those he touches through his work and teachings. With his ongoing projects and continuous efforts to elevate the arts globally, Antonio's legacy is one of inspiration, community-building, and empowerment, making him a true ambassador of the dreamers and creators of the world. Antonio Ma-at, was honored alongside artists, actors, directors, and authors at the 9th Asia's Pacific Lumina Awards 2024 as Asia's Outstanding Multi-talented International Journalist. As author of over 100 anthologies and the director behind international competitions like POP-MAPP his notable project, "Mothers of the World," his works not only celebrate personal triumphs but also champion community empowerment. Beyond his writing, Antonio passionately lectures on poetry with the Writers Global Movement and serves as its Executive Director in the Philippines. From pen to power, Antonio's journey as a multi-awarded international journalist, author, and literary visionary continues to inspire across continents. As the voice behind global anthologies and the heart of thriving writing communities, he brings not only stories — but legacy. (The author is International Tagore Awardee Multilingual poet and columnist Dr.Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University .Email. prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)





# Israeli fire kills at least 18 in Gaza, US envoy visits hostage family protest

**DEIR AL-BALAH(GAZA STRIP), Aug 2:** Hospitals in Gaza reported the killing of more than a dozen people, eight of them food-seekers, by Israeli fire on Saturday as Palestinians endured severe risks searching for food amid air-drops and restrictions on overland aid delivery.

Near a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation distribution site, Yahia Youssef, who had come to seek aid Saturday morning, described a panicked scene now grimly familiar. After helping carry out three people wounded by gunshots, he said he looked around and saw others lying on the ground bleeding.

"It's the same daily episode," Youssef said. In response to questions about several eyewitness accounts of violence at the northernmost of the Israeli-backed American contractor's four facilities, GHF said "nothing (happened) at or near our sites."

The episode came a day after US officials visited one site and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee called the distribution "an incredible feat." International outrage has mounted as the group's efforts to deliver aid to hunger-stricken Gaza have been marred by violence and controversy. "We weren't close to them (the troops) and there was no threat," Abed Salah, a man in his 30s who was among the crowds close to the GHF site near Netzarim corridor, said. "I escaped death miraculously."

The danger facing aid seekers in Gaza has compounded what international hunger experts this week



called a "worst-case scenario of famine" in the besieged enclave. Israel's nearly 22-month military offensive against Hamas has shattered security in the territory of some 2 million Palestinians and made it nearly impossible to deliver food safely to starving people. Seven Palestinians died of malnutrition-related causes in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said on Saturday.

They include a child, it said in a statement, bringing total deaths among children from causes related to malnutrition in Gaza to 93 since the war began. The ministry said 76 adults in Gaza have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when it started counting deaths among adults.

From May 27 to July 31, 859 people were killed near GHF sites, according to a United Nations report published Thursday. Hundreds

more have been killed along the routes of food convoys.

GHF says its armed contractors have only used pepper spray or fired warning shots to prevent deadly crowding. Israel's military has said it has only fired warning shots at people who approach its forces, though on Friday said it was working to make the routes under its control safer. Israel and GHF have said that the toll has been exaggerated.

Health officials reported that Israeli airstrikes and gunfire killed at least 18 Palestinians on Saturday, including three transported from the vicinity of a distribution site to a central Gaza hospital along with 36 others who were wounded.

Officials said 10 of Saturday's casualties were killed by strikes in central and southern Gaza. Nasser Hospital said it received the bodies of five people killed in two separate strikes on tents sheltering dis-

placed people. The dead include two brothers and a relative, who were killed when a strike hit their tent close to a main thoroughfare in Khan Younis.

The health ministry's ambulance and emergency service said an Israeli strike hit a family house between the towns of Zawaida and Deir al-Balah, killing two parents and their three children.

Another strike hit a tent close to the gate of a closed prison where the displaced have sheltered in Khan Younis, killing a mother and her daughter, they said.

The hospital said Israeli forces killed five other Palestinians who were among crowds awaiting aid near the newly constructed Morag corridor in Rafah and between Rafah and Khan Younis.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to questions about the strikes or gunfire near the aid sites. Its top general, meanwhile, warned Saturday that "combat will continue without rest" if hostages weren't freed. Lt Gen Eyal Zamir said Israel's military would adapt to "place Hamas under increasing pressure."

**Hostage families push Israel to cut deal**

In Tel Aviv, families of hostages protested and urged Israel's government to push harder for the release of their loved ones, including those shown in footage released by militant groups earlier this week.

US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff joined them, a week after quitting ceasefire talks, blaming Hamas's intrans-

signance and pledging to find other ways to free hostages and make Gaza safe.

Of the 251 hostages who were abducted by Hamas-led militants, around 20 are believed to be alive in Gaza. Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the second-largest militant group in Gaza, released separate videos of individual hostages this week, triggering outrage among hostage families and Israeli society.

Israeli media hasn't broadcast the videos, calling them propaganda, but the family of 21-year-old Rom Braslavski allowed the release of a photograph showing him visibly emaciated in an unknown location. Tami Braslavski, his mother, blamed top Israeli officials and demanded they meet with her.

**Airdrops expand despite limited impact**

Alongside Israel, several European countries announced plans this week to join the Jordan-led coalition orchestrating airdropping parcels, though most acknowledge the strategy remains deeply inadequate. "If there is political will to allow airdrops - which are highly costly, insufficient & inefficient, there should be similar political will to open the road crossings," Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, wrote on X on Saturday. "Let's go back to what works & let us do our job."

The war in Gaza began when Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians. (AP)

# Eight new Indian Consular Application Centres inaugurated across US



**NEW YORK/EDISON, Aug 2:** India has opened eight new consular centres across the US, significantly expanding the delivery footprint for visa, passport and other services and streamlining them to make them more accessible and efficient for the Indian diaspora in the country.

India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Kwatra on Friday virtually inaugurated the new Indian Consular Application Centres (ICAC) in Boston, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Edison, Orlando, Raleigh and San Jose. An additional ICAC will soon open in Los Angeles.

Starting August 1, 2025, all consular services, including passport, visa, OCI, surrender certificate, life certificate, birth/marriage certificate, police clearance, attestations, and more, will be provided exclusively through VFS Global Centres.

The expansion brings the total number of ICACs across the US to 17, making consular services more accessible to Indian and American citizens in the country.

Kwatra described this as a "very significant" expansion of the consular services delivery footprint offered by the Embassy of India across the United States, which is home to a nearly five million-strong Indian diaspora.

Kwatra said that the expansion underscores Prime Minister Narendra Modi's deep regard for the Indian diaspora, which the Indian leader has described as the "strongest brand ambassador of India" and is at the heart of a strong India-US partnership that is manifested through people-to-people ties between the two societies.

"We are confident that these centres will play a crucial role in fostering and continuing a strong relationship with our diaspora, but at the same time also empower our diaspora to engage more deeply between our two countries," Kwatra said.

He added that the diaspora plays a significant and crucial role in strengthening and contributing to the India-US relationship.

Highlighting the "very strong political engagement between the two countries" in recent months, Kwatra noted PM Modi's visit to Washington in February, visits by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, as well as the visit by US Vice President JD Vance and his family to India in April.

Kwatra said these visits have "really deepened not just the discussions, but also the scope and the depth of our partnership."

"It is my belief, as has also been stated by the Prime Minister, that you are a living bridge between our two societies, two countries. You contribute to the development and enrichment of this relationship, as also of the two countries. And I hope that you will continue to play this important and irreplaceable role," he said.

India's Consul General in New York, Binaya Pradhan, attended the special inauguration ceremony at the Indian Consular Application Centre in Edison that was attended by Edison Mayor Sam Joshi as well as prominent members of the Indian-American community.

Kwatra inaugurated the centres and addressed the diaspora who also joined virtually from across the new centres that have been opened. Head of North America and Caribbean, VFS Global, Amit Kumar Sharma told the gathering in Edison that the agency's focus has been to make "our services more convenient, comfortable and more accessible" and to serve the community better.

Noting that the centres will now be open on Saturdays as well, Sharma pointed out, amid applause, that VFS has worked with 70 governments across 150 countries, and this will be the first time that it is going to work for any government on a Saturday. This commitment "reflects the mindset of the leadership, what they want to achieve," Sharma said.

"And they came up with a process that addresses these concerns," Sharma said. (PTI)

## Thailand returns 2 wounded soldiers to Cambodia but continues to hold 18 of their comrades

**PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA), Aug 2:** Cambodia on Friday welcomed the return of two wounded soldiers who had been captured by the Thai army after the two sides had already implemented a ceasefire to end five days of combat

over competing territorial claims. Their repatriation comes amid accusations and bickering over whether either side had targeted civilians and breached the laws of war, and sharp nationalist feuding on social media. (AP)

## Three people die in overnight Ukrainian drone strikes on Russia

**KYIV, Aug 2:** Ukrainian drone attacks overnight into Saturday killed three people, Russian officials said Saturday.

Russia's Defence Ministry said air defences intercepted or destroyed 112 drones across eight Russian regions and the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula. A drone attack on the Rostov region, on the border with Ukraine, killed one person, acting governor Yuri Slyusar said.

Further from the front line, a woman was killed and two other people wounded in a drone strike on business premises in the Penza region, according to regional governor Oleg Melnichenko. In the Samara region, falling drone debris sparked a fire that killed an elderly resident, regional Gov Vyacheslav Fedorishchev said.

According to the Ukrainian air force, Russia launched 53 drones and decoys at Ukraine overnight into Saturday. It

said that air defences shot down or jammed 45 drones. Eleven people were wounded in an overnight drone strike on the Kharkiv region, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday. The reciprocal drone strikes followed a day of mourning in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Friday, after a Russian drone and missile attack killed 31 people, including five children, and wounded over 150.

The continued attacks came after US President Donald Trump on Tuesday gave Russian President Vladimir Putin a shorter deadline — Aug 8 — for peace efforts to make progress.

Trump said Thursday that special envoy Steve Witkoff is heading to Russia to push Moscow to agree to a ceasefire in its war with Ukraine and has threatened new economic sanctions if progress is not made. (AP)



No. TE(Ex) Admn-1/2025/438

### EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

**ONLINE COUNSELLING FOR ADMISSION INTO THE 3RD SEMESTER B.TECH. PROGRAMME [Lateral Entry]**  
[Offered by the State Government Engineering Colleges of Assam]

Regarding participation in the online counselling process for provisional admission into the 3rd Semester B.Tech. programme based on the Joint Lateral Entrance Examination (JLEE)2025 conducted by Assam Science & Technology University, Guwahati.

**The aspiring eligible candidates having JLEE 2025 score/rank are invited to participate in the online counselling process by logging in, using their Application No. of JLEE-2025 and Date of Birth, w.e.f. 4th August, 2025 to 6th August, 2025. The link of the online portal will be made available at <https://dte.assam.gov.in>**

Note:-

- For further details regarding the educational qualification etc., please refer to the Counselling Guidelines/Notifications for JLEE-2025 available in the website: <https://dte.assam.gov.in>
- Candidates are requested to complete the registration, choice filling and payment of Rs. 800/- (Rupees Eight Hundred only) (Non-refundable) in the portal within the stipulated time. The provisionally allotted list of the successfully registered candidates will be notified on 9th August, 2025 in the DTE's website <https://dte.assam.gov.in> as well as in the website of the State Government Engineering Colleges of Assam. Accordingly, candidates are requested to visit the websites frequently.
- If a candidate uploads any forged documents or submits misleading information, his/her candidature will be forfeited at any stage/in the future.
- Provisionally selected candidates are requested to report to the concerned College where he/she is provisionally allotted with all original documents and a set of self-attested copies of all relevant documents on 12/08/2025. Candidates may contact the admission Co-ordinator of the concerned college and visit the website of the allotted college. Failing to report for verification and admission on the date notified will lead to cancellation of his/her allotted seat.
- The candidates have to pay the admission fees etc. as per the rates of the concerned college.

Sd/-

Director of Technical Education, Assam,  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19.

DIPR/D/HLT/99/3-Aug-25

No. TE(Ex) Admn-1/2025/437

### EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

**ONLINE COUNSELLING FOR ADMISSION INTO THE 1ST SEMESTER MCA PROGRAMME**  
[Offered by the State Government Engineering Colleges of Assam]

Regarding participation in the online counselling process for provisional admission into the 1st semester MCA programme based on the Joint MCA Entrance Examination (JMEE) 2025, conducted by Assam Science & Technology University, Guwahati.

**The aspiring eligible candidates having JMEE 2025 score/rank are requested to participate in the online counselling process by logging in using their Application No. of JMEE 2025 and Date of Birth, w.e.f. 4th August, 2025 to 6th August, 2025. The link of the online portal will be made available at <https://dte.assam.gov.in>**

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Sd/-

Director of Technical Education, Assam,  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19.

DIPR /D/HLT/98/3-Aug-25

### GOVT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B), HILLS

ASSAM, DIPHU

No. ACEHUS/SOPD/03/2025-26/05,

Dated 23/07/2025.

### PRESS TENDER NOTICE

The Additional Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B), Hills Assam, Diphu on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites Bids from registered Contractors Class-1 (A.B.&C) (Roads) for the work under AAP(KAAC) for the year 2024-25 under PWD Baithalangso Roads Division, Donkamokam. The details may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 05/08/2025 to 12/08/2025.

Sl No.	Name of Work	Bid Value	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1.	"M&BT of road from Mukhimgaon to Kachari Basti via Bilaspuri Basti from Ch.0.00 m to Ch. 1240.00m (L-1.24 Km under SOPD, Council Section for 2023-24. "	Rs. 1,23,06,890.00	12 Months (Twelve)	2% (Two Percent) for General category or 1% (One Percent) Reserved category.	1500(Fifteen hundred) Only
2.	"M&BT of road from Kachari Basti Tinali to Dengmepi from Ch.0.00 m to Ch.1960.00 m (L-1.96 Km) via Bilaspuri Basti from Ch.0.00 m to Ch. 1240.00m (L-1.24 Km under SOPD Council, Council Section for 2023-24."	Rs.1,96,30,090.00	12 Months (Twelve)		1500(Fifteen hundred) Only

Note: : Bid price may vary at the time of DNIT, for which no claim will be admissible.

: The Press Notice will form part of the Bidding Document.

Sd/-

Addl. Chief Engineer,  
P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam,  
Diphu.

Dated. 23/07/2025.

Memo No. ACEH/CS/SOPD/03/2025-26/05-(A)



# DCM Chowna Mein sets new benchmarks for aspirational programmes

Event recognises Namsai's leap in national rankings; DCM directs full KPI saturation by 2025, launches Akanksha Haat to boost SHGs and rural economy

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Chowna Mein on Friday outlined a renewed vision for accelerated grassroots development under the Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks initiatives at the Sampoonata Abhiyaan Samman Samaroh, held at the Dorjee Khandu State Convention Centre in Itanagar.

The event was jointly organised by the Planning and Investment Department of the state government and NITI Aayog to honour the achievements of district and block-level administrations in implementing flagship government schemes.

The information was shared through an official statement.

Calling the Sampoonata Abhiyaan more than just a governance initiative, Mein described it as "a mission to ensure that every single citizen reaps the full benefits of every flagship government scheme."

He emphasised the need to transform

aspirations into measurable outcomes and acknowledged the crucial role of local administrators, field workers, and community stakeholders in enabling last-mile service delivery.

A key highlight of the event was the recognition of Namsai district, which has witnessed a significant improvement in performance, climbing from the 97th to the 12th rank among 112 Aspirational Districts in the country.

Mein attributed this success to the co-ordinated efforts of the district administration and community participation.

He specifically congratulated the Deputy Commissioner of Namsai and the Block Development Officer of Chongkham for achieving 100% saturation in several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under the Aspirational Block Programme.

"This remarkable leap is a testament to the tireless efforts of our officials and the community alike," he said, while also lauding the performance of blocks such as Lekang, which along with



Chongkham, achieved notable developmental milestones.

However, Mein was clear that the journey was far from over. He issued a directive for the complete saturation of remaining KPIs in Namsai, as well as in Chongkham (Namsai), Tali (Kra Daadi), and Pongchau (Longding) by December 2025.

He announced plans for personal field visits to the Aspirational Blocks of Pongchau and Tali during the winter to oversee progress.

"Monitoring must be regular, purposeful, and aligned with our goal of saturation," he added.

The Deputy CM urged senior officers and Deputy Commissioners to adopt a

rigorous and proactive approach in overseeing Central and State flagship programmes.

He called for greater accountability and faster execution across all sectors including healthcare, nutrition, education, electrification, and soil health.

Describing the ongoing development push as a collective movement, Mein remarked, "This is the rise of a governance culture called 'Team Arunachal'."

He also acknowledged the critical contributions of Deputy Commissioners, District Planning Officers (DPOs), BDOs, data managers, and ground-level workers.

In a bid to promote community entrepreneurship and rural livelihoods, Mein also launched the Akanksha Haat — a week-long exhibition platform aimed at empowering self-help groups (SHGs) and showcasing local enterprises.

He described it as a celebration of innovation at the grassroots and a step towards strengthening the rural economy through self-reliance.

"This platform not only promotes local products and talents but also fosters economic empowerment," he said.

Speaking at the event, Commissioner (Planning & Investment) Ankur Garg thanked NITI Aayog for its continued guidance and support.

He noted that the Aspirational District and Block Programmes are driving a fundamental shift toward targeted, data-driven development anchored in convergence, competition, and collaboration.

Among the dignitaries present were Namsai MLA Zingnu Namchoom, Secretary (Planning & Investment) RK Sharma, Secretary (Rural Development & Panchayati Raj) Sonal Swaroop, San Gupta from NITI Aayog, and the Deputy Commissioners of Namsai and Longding.

The event concluded with the distribution of awards and commendations to outstanding districts, blocks, and officials, underlining the government's commitment to inclusive, performance-based governance.

## CM applauds Roing town's waste collection method model for cultural revival



**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has lauded a unique initiative by the District Urban Development Agency (DUDA) at Roing that blends civic responsibility with cultural preservation.

Roing is the headquarters of the Lower Dibang Valley district.

Highlighting the effort in a social media post on Saturday, Khandu said, "Something meaningful is taking place in Roing," and praised DUDA for "leading with both purpose and creativity".

As part of the initiative, garbage collection vehicles in Roing have replaced loud music with recorded public awareness messages in the Idu Mishmi language, an indige-

nous dialect classified as "definitely endangered" by UNESCO.

These messages, broadcast during routine rounds, urge residents to keep their surroundings clean while promoting pride in their linguistic heritage.

Describing the move as "a simple yet thoughtful shift that connects cleanliness with cultural preservation", the chief minister underscored how everyday government services can be re-imagined as tools for celebrating identity.

This first-of-its-kind effort in the northeastern state is receiving widespread appreciation for its dual impact, creating awareness on sanitation, while reviving interest in a native language spoken by fewer

than 12,000 people.

The Idu Mishmi community, primarily concentrated in the Lower Dibang Valley region, now hears its language echoed daily in public spaces, a subtle yet powerful reminder of cultural continuity.

The initiative aligns with the state's broader goals of preserving tribal heritage while delivering grassroots governance.

Khandu's endorsement adds momentum to the effort, serving as a model for other districts to explore culturally rooted innovations in public service.

By turning a daily civic routine into a platform for cultural revival, Roing has set an inspiring example, showing that even a garbage collection drive can help keep not just the streets clean, but a language alive.

In his Maan Ki Baat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 27 spotlighted Roing as an inspiring example of how small towns are finding innovative solutions to cleanliness and environmental challenges.

"There was a time when waste management was a big challenge confronting the health of the people in Roing. The people there took responsibility. The Green Roing Initiative was started, and then an entire park was created from recycled waste," Modi had said in his radio address. (PTI)

## Parang Circle wins 1<sup>st</sup> Late Tech Vijay Tara Memorial Volleyball Tourney

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** The inaugural edition of the Late Tech Vijay Tara Memorial Men's Volleyball Tournament concluded on a spirited note on Friday at the General Ground in Ganga Village, Itanagar, with Parang Circle lifting the championship trophy after defeating Balijan Circle in a closely contested final.

Organised by the United Leil Tara Youth Foundation (ULTYF) to mark the first death anniversary of Late Tech Vijay Tara, the tournament celebrated his memory while promoting unity and sportsmanship among youth.

The event began on July 31 and featured participation from 21 teams across various districts of the state.

The closing ceremony was attended by Chief Engi-

neer (Power), Transmission Planning & Monitoring Zone, Er Tara Kaya Tara, as the chief guest.

Director of Agriculture T.D. Neckom graced the occasion as the guest of honour, while Govin Tara, Proprietor of M/s TG Construction, Borum Village, Naharlagun, participated as the Special Invitee.

Former ULTYF President Debia Mui was also present. The tournament was inaugurated by 13th Itanagar MLA Tech Kaso, with Tana Nikam Tara, Superintendent Engineer (PWD), serving as guest of honour at the opening ceremony. Organisers and participants highlighted the tournament's role in fostering youth engagement and remembered Late Tech Vijay Tara as an inspiration for the community.

## Book on breastfeeding launched at TRIHMS to mark World Breastfeeding Week



**HT Correspondent**

**NAHARLAGUN, Aug 2:** A book titled "Breastfeeding: The Art and Science of Lactation" was launched today at the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS) in a significant event that marked the beginning of World Breastfeeding Week celebrations in Arunachal Pradesh.

The event was held at the Lecture Hall of the Old Assembly Building and witnessed the participation of senior health professionals, administrators, public health experts, and mothers from across the region.

According to an official statement, the book has been authored by a multidisciplinary team and edited by Dr Amrita Sarkar, with Dr Moji Jini, Director of TRIHMS, serving as the Chairman of the Scientific Committee.

The publication has already drawn attention in national and international lactation advocacy circles, with endorsements from prominent figures such as Canadian lactation expert Jack Newman, the Department of Pediatrics at Monash University, and the Association of Lactation Professionals India (ALPI).

Dr Arun Gupta, a renowned paediatrician and founder of the Breastfeeding Promotion Network

of India (BPNI), has contributed the foreword.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Amrita Sarkar shared her personal and professional motivations behind the book.

"Breastfeeding is not just nutrition. It's immunity, bonding, empowerment, and in many cases, survival," she said, "I wanted to create something accessible for both the health worker in a village PHC and the paediatrician in a metro hospital."

She further stated that the book draws from clinical practice, classroom teaching, and grassroots fieldwork to provide a scientifically robust yet culturally sensitive guide.

Commissioner of Women and Child Development (WCD), Mimum Tayeng, who was present at the launch, appealed to all stakeholders to create greater awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding.

"Beyond scientific content, what we need are supportive ecosystems — dedicated lactation spaces, crèche facilities for working mothers, and normalisation of breastfeeding in public," she said.

Her remarks struck a chord with many mothers and health workers present at the event.

Director In-charge of WCD, C. Tangiang, lauded the collaboration

between TRIHMS and public health agencies.

She stated that the book would be a valuable resource not only for medical professionals but also for Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) staff, and educated mothers seeking reliable guidance.

She added that WCD would consider circulating the book through ICDS centres and including it in state-level training modules for frontline workers.

TRIHMS Director Dr Moji Jini spoke on the importance of institutional support for maternal health and breastfeeding awareness.

He was joined by Dr Nani Tago and Dr Dev, Head of the Department of Community Medicine, as well as Deputy Dean (Academics), who all shared insights on the long-term physical and psychological benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and children.

The event highlighted the convergence of medical science, community care, and administrative support in furthering the cause of maternal and child health.

It concluded with a strong collective message: that breastfeeding must be supported not only in clinics but also in homes, workplaces, and society at large.

## IMD issues very heavy rain alert

**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday forecast very heavy rain accompanied by thunder and lightning across several districts of Arunachal Pradesh over the next 24 hours.

According to an IMD bulletin, heavy rain and thunderstorms are "very likely" to occur at isolated places over Papum Pare and West Siang districts within the next 24 hours.

Similar weather conditions are also likely in East Kameng, Lower Siang, and Pakke Kessang.

Citizens in the affected districts have been advised to follow the State Disaster Management Authority guidelines and stay updated through official sources. (PTI)

## Man goes missing

**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** A 28-year-old man went missing while fishing in the Yomgo river in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district after he slipped and was swept away by strong currents, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred around 2 pm on Friday when Limin Ingo, a resident of Paya village in the district, was fishing in the river along with his friends. Aalo police station officer in-charge Yomken Riram said.

"Two of his friends, who were fishing some distance away, rushed to rescue him, but failed due to strong currents. Ingo is yet to be traced," the officer said.

"We have requested the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) to trace the missing person," he said. Hundreds of people from Paya village assisted the police in the search operation. (PTI)

## Over 4,000 farmers in Arunachal district get PM-KISAN instalment

**ITANAGAR, Aug 2:** A total of 4,161 farmers in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Subansiri district are among the beneficiaries of the 20th instalment of the PM-KISAN scheme, which was disbursed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. The PM released approximately ₹ 20,500 crore to around 9.7 crore eligible farmers across the country during the event, which was live-streamed. In Lower Subansiri, the live-streaming was organised at Abotani Hall in Hapoli, where 450 local beneficiaries gathered, a statement said.

Deputy Commissioner Oli Perme, Zilla Parishad Chairperson Pura Dollo, District Agriculture Officer Tasso Butung, and other officials were present at the programme. The PM-KISAN is a flagship welfare scheme launched by the Centre in 2019 to provide financial support to farmers across the country.

Under the scheme, eligible land-holding farmer families receive ₹ 6,000 annually in three equal instalments of ₹ 2,000 each, directly in their bank accounts.

The initiative aims to ensure a steady income for farmers to help them meet their agricultural and household needs. (PTI)

## Namsai's Chow Rajing Mungyak wins gold for India at Indo-Nepal Yuva Series 2025

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAI, Aug 2:** Chow Rajing Mungyak, a promising young powerlifter from Empong village in Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district, has made the nation proud by clinching a gold medal for India at the Indo-Nepal Yuva Series 2025.

The international sporting event, aimed at promoting youth engagement and sportsmanship between India and Nepal, concluded on July 30 at the Rangasala Stadium in Pokhara, Nepal.

According to an official statement, Mungyak delivered an exceptional performance in the powerlifting deadlift category, successfully lifting 180 kg in the under-19, 53 kg weight class.

His dominant display secured him the top podium position and marked a significant achievement in his budding athletic career.

The Indo-Nepal Yuva Series 2025 was organised by the Youth Games Development Association of Nepal.

The event saw participation from numerous talented athletes from both countries, fostering mu-



tual respect and camaraderie through competitive sport.

Mungyak's performance not only contributed to India's medal tally but also showcased the potential and discipline of youth athletes from Arunachal Pradesh.

Upon his return to Namsai, Chow Rajing Mungyak was accorded a hero's welcome.

A felicitation ceremony was organised by the All Tai Khanti Singpho Students' Union (ATKSSU) and the All Namsai District Students' Union.

Friends, family members, and well-wishers gathered in large numbers to celebrate his accomplishment and honour his dedication to sport.

Mungyak, the son of Chow Miong Mungyak, has become a local icon, inspiring young athletes across the region to pursue excellence in sports.

His achievement is being seen as a reflection of the growing sporting culture in Arunachal Pradesh and the importance of support systems that encourage youth participation in competitive events.

Officials and community leaders in Namsai have lauded Mungyak's success, noting that his gold medal is a moment of pride not just for his family and district, but for the entire state.

Many have also called for increased support for rural and tribal athletes, whose talents often remain underrepresented on national and international stages.

With determination, hard work, and community support, Chow Rajing Mungyak has set a high benchmark for others to follow.

His victory at the Indo-Nepal Yuva Series serves as a testament to the resilience and rising capabilities of young sportspersons from the frontier state of Arunachal Pradesh.

## Block-level training on PAI 2.0 and LSDGs begins at Yingkiong

**HT Correspondent**

**YINGKIONG, Aug 2:** A two-day training programme on Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI 2.0) and the Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) commenced today at Yingkiong Block, Upper Siang district.

The training, aimed at enhancing the implementation of evidence-based development planning at the grassroots level, is being held under the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, and facilitated by the State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), Arunachal Pradesh.

According to an official statement, the programme was formally inaugurated by Dr. Nijohn Daggen, District Panchayati Development Officer (DPDO) and Chairman of the District Data Validation Committee.

In his inaugural address, Dr Daggen highlighted the significance of inter-departmental coordination for the effective rollout of PAI 2.0 and urged all block-level Heads of Departments (HoDs) to maintain synergy with the Panchayati Raj Department.

He stressed that timely execution of PAI 2.0 activities is crucial to meeting the deadlines set by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

The training sessions are being conducted by a team from SIRD&PR comprising SW Bagang, Assistant Director-cum-Course Director, Sujit Kundu, Consultant, and Er Anand Jopir, District Nodal Officer/Master Trainer.

The programme aims to equip officials with a comprehensive understanding of the PAI 2.0 framework, data validation protocols, and the integration of LSDGs into Gram Panchayat-level planning mechanisms.

The training is expected to build the capacities of departmental functionaries, enabling them to effectively contribute to decentralised planning and localised implementation of the SDGs.

By aligning rural governance with national development goals, the initiative also seeks to foster accountability, transparency, and measurable progress at the panchayat level.

Officials present noted that the sessions would significantly enhance the preparedness of block-level officers in carrying forward the vision of sustainable, inclusive, and data-driven rural development.



# India showed its 'Rudra roop' during Operation Sindoor: Narendra Modi

**'Cong and its allies are unable to digest the fact that India demolished terrorist hideouts inside Pak'**

**VARANASI, Aug 2:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday invoked Lord Shiva's 'Rudra roop' (fierce form) to describe India's resolute action against terrorism, saying Operation Sindoor showcased the country's strength to the world and delivered a clear message that anyone who dares attack India will not be spared, not even in 'Pataal Lok'.

"My heart was filled with sorrow for the 26 people who lost their lives in the Pahalgal terror attack," Modi said while addressing a public meeting in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi.

"My promise to avenge 'Sindoor' of our daughters was fulfilled with blessings of Mahadev," he said, adding, "I dedicate the success of the operation at the feet of Mahadev." The prime minister also stressed that the "unity of 140 crore countrymen" became the "strength of Operation Sindoor".

"Shiva means welfare but when terrorism raises its ugly head, Mahadev takes his 'Rudra roop'. During Operation Sindoor, the world witnessed this very form of India," the prime minister said.

Taking a dig at the Opposition, Modi alleged that while the country



was celebrating the success of Operation Sindoor, "some people in our own country were troubled by it". "Congress and its allies are unable to digest the fact that India demolished terrorist hideouts inside Pakistan," he said.

"Aren't you proud of Operation Sindoor? Aren't you proud that India destroyed terror bases (in Pakistan)," the prime minister asked the gathering. He added, "You all must have seen the visuals of how our drones and missiles precisely struck and reduced terrorist headquarters to rubble."

"Several air bases in Pakistan are still in ICU. While Pakistan's an-

guish is understandable, what's shocking is that Congress and Samajwadi Party leaders are also unable to cope with it," Modi said.

The prime minister also accused the Congress of repeatedly insulting the valour of the armed forces and even terming 'Operation Sindoor' a "tamasha" (spectacle).

"Can 'Sindoor' ever be a joke? They dared to insult the sacred mark of our sisters and the valour of our soldiers," he said.

Modi also attacked the Samajwadi Party (SP) for questioning the timing of the military strikes.

"One of their leaders asked in Parliament 'why were the attackers

of Pahalgal killed now'. Should I call and ask Samajwadi leaders whether to strike now or later? Should we wait and let the terrorists escape," Modi asked.

"These are the same people who during their rule in Uttar Pradesh gave clean chits to terrorists and withdrew cases against those involved in bomb blasts," Modi claimed, adding that such parties are now disturbed because terrorists are being eliminated.

"This is 'Naya Bharat' (New India), which worships Lord Shiva but turns Kaal Bhairav against its enemies when needed," the prime minister said. Modi also said that Operation Sindoor has demonstrated India's indigenous defence capabilities to the world.

"The power of our locally developed missiles, drones and air defence systems were on full display (during Operation Sindoor). Our BrahMos missile instilled such fear in the enemy that people in Pakistan can't sleep peacefully even in their dreams." Launched on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgal terror attack that claimed 26 lives, Operation Sindoor showcased calibrated, tri-services action targeting terror hideouts in Pakistan. (PTI)

## In Varanasi, PM Modi dedicates success of Operation Sindoor to Mahadev, slams Oppn

**VARANASI, Aug 2:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday invoked Lord Shiva's 'Rudra roop' (fierce form) to describe India's resolute action against terrorism, saying Operation Sindoor showcased the country's strength to the world and delivered a clear message that anyone who dares attack India will not be spared, not even in 'Pataal Lok'.

Addressing a public meeting in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi, the prime minister also accused the Congress of repeatedly insulting the valour of the armed forces and even terming 'Operation Sindoor' a "tamasha" (spectacle).

"Can 'Sindoor' ever be a joke? They dared to insult the sacred mark of our sisters and the valour of our soldiers," he said.

"My heart was filled with sorrow for the 26 people who lost their lives in the Pahalgal terror attack ... My promise to avenge 'Sindoor' of our daughters was fulfilled with blessings of Mahadev," he said, adding, "I dedicate the success of the operation at the feet of Ma-

hadev."

The prime minister stressed that the "unity of 140 crore countrymen" became the "strength of Operation Sindoor".

"Shiva means welfare, but when terrorism and injustice raise their ugly head, Mahadev takes his 'Rudra roop'. During Operation Sindoor, the world witnessed this very form of India," the prime minister said, warning that "whoever attacks India will not survive, even in Pataal Lok (netherworld)".

Taking a dig at the Opposition, Modi alleged that while the country was celebrating the success of Operation Sindoor, "some people in our own country were troubled by it".

"Congress and its allies are unable to digest the fact that India demolished terrorist hideouts inside Pakistan," he said.

"Aren't you proud of Operation Sindoor? Aren't you proud that India destroyed terror bases (in Pakistan and PoK)," the prime minister asked the gathering.

He added, "You all must have

## Rahul alleges Arun Jaitley threatened him on farm laws, BJP rubbishes charge as 'fake news'

**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday claimed that former finance minister Arun Jaitley had threatened him to not speak against the farm laws else he would face action, a charge rubbished by the BJP as "fake news" and asked him to stick to facts instead.

Rohan Jaitley, son of the former union minister, also slammed Gandhi over his remarks, asking the Congress leader to "let the departed Rest in Peace".

Addressing Congress' annual legal conclave at the Vignyan Bhawan, Gandhi said, "I remember when I was fighting the farm laws -- he's not here anymore, so I really shouldn't say it, but I will -- Arun Jaitley ji was sent to me to threaten me."

He went on to add: "He said to me, 'If you carry on down this path, opposing the government and fighting us on the farm laws, we will have to take action against you.'"

"I looked at him in the face and said, 'I think you don't know or have an idea who you're talking to. Because, we are Congress people, and we're not cowards. We never bend; the superpower British couldn't bend us and who the hell are you.'"

The BJP hit back at Gandhi, saying the farm laws were brought in 2020 while Jaitley passed away in 2019 and asked the Congress leader to stick to facts instead of rewriting timelines to "suit narratives".

BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya wrote on X, "Fake News Alert."

"Rahul Gandhi claims that Arun Jaitley approached him to water down his opposition to the 2020 farm laws. Let's set the record straight -- Arun Jaitley ji passed away on August, 24 2019."

"The draft Farm Bills were brought to the Union Cabinet on June 3, 2020. The laws were enacted in September 2020," he said.

Malviya said any discussion, whether in support or opposition of the Bill, began after "these developments".

"To suggest Arun Jaitley ji approached him for any-



thing at all is factually incorrect and misleading," he said, adding, "Let's stick to facts and not rewrite timelines to suit narratives."

The BJP leader also posted a video clip of the remarks Gandhi made at the conclave.

Jaitley's son Rohan also took to X, saying, "Rahul Gandhi now claims my late father, Arun Jaitley, threatened him over the farm laws. Let me remind him, my father passed away in 2019. The farm laws were introduced in 2020."

"More importantly, it was not in my father's nature to threaten anyone over an opposing view. He was a staunch democrat and always believed in building consensus," he wrote.

"If at all such a situation was to occur, as it often does in politics, he would invite free and open discussions to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to all. That was simply who he was and that remains his legacy today."

"I would appreciate Rahul Gandhi being mindful while speaking of those not with us. He attempted something similar with Manohar Parrikar ji, politicising his final days which was in equally poor taste," he added. (PTI)

## Bengal govt commences outreach programme to address neighbourhood issues

**KOLKATA, Aug 2:** Ahead of the 2026 assembly elections, the West Bengal government on Saturday launched a ₹ 8,000-crore outreach programme to address local issues, like setting up street lamps, repairing roads and ensuring water supply, across districts.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said 632 camps were being set up across the state on the first day of the programme - Amader Para, Amader Samadhan (Our neighbourhood, our Solution).

In a post on X, the CM said, "Today, on the first day of 'Amader Para Amader Samadhan' (APAS), 632 camps are being held across the state."

The programme is a unique flagship initiative aimed at "institutionalising participatory governance and re-imagining grassroots service delivery through people-engagement and empowerment," she said in the post.

"(An) APAS camp is a platform where local people shall deliberate, identify and prioritise their local level infrastructure needs. ₹ 8,000+ crore is the outlay for APAS with ₹ 10 lakhs allocated per booth and 80,000+ polling booths being covered by 27,000+ camps," Banerjee added.

She also said 'Duare Sarkar' counters have also been set up in APAS camps.

'Durare Sarkar' (government at doorsteps) was an outreach programme introduced by the government earlier to provide services under various state-run schemes.

"I invite the people to visit their camps and participate in the discussions to make APAS a grand success. I also thank the concerned government officials and other stakeholders for their efforts in the smooth rollout of the campaign," Banerjee said. A task force headed by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant would monitor the programme, and district-level task forces have been formed as camps started functioning on Saturday.

While these camps will be held for two months, there will be an administrative evaluation for 30 days, a government statement said.

"The implementation or addressing the issues raised by the people will take a period of three months from the day of launch," it said. In the Kolkata Municipal Corporation area, there is one camp for every two booths.

"We had seen that there are small teething issues plaguing a locality, which are too localised but need urgent attention."

"While local civic bodies, people's representatives and several agencies are there to look into various issues - like the setting up of a tap, need for an electric pole or ensure proper lighting in the area, this interactive initiative is an inclusive one where various things can be brought up for being sorted out under one umbrella," a senior government official said.

Banerjee had said state government officials would be present on the ground to listen to the people's problems, and the centres would address these issues in a locality.

"You (citizen) can track schedule, status and progress at apas.wb.gov.in. You decide how your booth's budget is spent," said the government advertisement on Saturday announcing the start of the outreach programme.

The programme is rooted in the vision of a self-reliant Bengal, where the focus is not merely on delivery but on deep listening, transparency and collaboration, the statement said. (PTI)

## 'The occasion warranted paying tributes to the country's armed forces' Rajnath flays oppn for raising questions on Op Sindoor in Parl



**PATNA, Aug 2:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday came down heavily on the Congress-led opposition for "raising questions" about Operation Sindoor "instead of paying tributes to the valour displayed by our armed forces".

Addressing a function organised by a media house here, the former BJP president also alleged that the Congress had been "soft" on insurgency while in power, and tried to "frame innocent people" by spinning the theory of "saffron terror" because of "vote bank" considerations.

"Recently, we had discussions in both Houses of Parliament on Operation Sindoor. Both debates lasted for 16 hours each. The opposition, which had started off on a belligerent note, was left dumb-struck," Singh claimed.

Singh said it is "regrettable" that the opposition was raising questions on Operation Sindoor, "which saw our valiant armed forces destroying so many terror hideouts".

"The occasion warranted paying tributes to the country's armed forces, he said.

"This has been the tradition in the past. During the war of 1971, (when Indira Gandhi was the prime minister), our leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee had wholeheartedly supported the government of the day," Singh said.

He also acknowledged that "political and social unity" had been on display in 1999, when Vajpayee was the PM, and Kargil happened, adding, "such unity is essential to root out terror once and for all".

The defence minister also drew a contrast between the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, characterised by "decisive action against terror", and the "soft" stance of the past Congress governments, weighed down by concerns of "vote bank" and "politics of appeasement".

"People still shudder to recall the pre-2014 era, when terror attacks had become the order of the day. A series of bomb explosions were seen in this very city," said Singh, referring to the serial blasts that had rocked the Gandhi Maidan in 2013,

when he was sharing the stage with Modi, then the chief minister of Gujarat and the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, during the latter's maiden rally in Bihar.

"Elsewhere, like we saw in the Malegaon blast case, innocent people were framed in the name of saffron terror. The judge who delivered the judgment made the remark that terror has no religion. This is exactly what we have been saying all along," the senior BJP leader said.

All the accused in the case, including former BJP MP Pragna Thakur, were recently acquitted.

Singh, who had held the Home portfolio in the previous Narendra Modi cabinet, said, "Vote bank politics weakens the nation's fight against terror. In the last 11 years, our resolve against the menace has grown stronger. The morale of our armed forces is skyrocketing. Anything that dampens this enthusiasm is neither in national interest nor in public interest."

Singh also touched upon the "rapid economic progress" under Modi, asserting, "We were the 11th largest economy of the world a decade ago. Today, we are occupying the fourth spot. No power can now stop us from reaching the top. The country is in safe hands, and so is Bihar, with the NDA in power. May this winning combination go from strength to strength." (PTI)

## BJP rolls out CAA help desks to blunt Mamata's 'Bengali Asmita' pitch in crucial Matua belt

**KOLKATA, Aug 2:** In a push to reclaim the Matua vote and blunt TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's "Bengali Asmita" pitch, the BJP has launched CAA help desks in parts of West Bengal, facilitating citizenship applications in what is being seen as its most aggressive outreach initiative to woo refugee voters ahead of the 2026 assembly polls.

Branded as "CAA Sahajogita Shibirs", these help desks first emerged in Bagda and are now spreading rapidly to Bongaon South and other Matua-majority pockets in North 24 Parganas.

Their pitch is clear: "apply first, verify later". Refugees, who fled neighbouring countries due to religious persecution, mostly undocumented, can still apply for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, a BJP leader said.

The BJP is setting up these camps as both a lifeline for persecuted Hindus from Bangladesh and a direct ideological counter to Mamata Banerjee's identity politics, the party functionary said.

"CAA is a law passed under the BJP's rule to help persecuted minorities, especially Hindus from neighbouring countries. Its smooth implementation is our responsibility. There have been issues related to documentation. It will be taken care of. BJP workers will stand by the refugee society everywhere," said West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhat-tacharya.

Local BJP workers and Matua volunteers are assisting with online forms, se-

curing affidavits, and handing out receipts that act as proof of application. The party's message is "justice delayed is no longer denied". Behind the visible mobilisation lies political urgency and a series of unsettling episodes that have injected fresh momentum into the CAA campaign.

Just last month, a Matua family from West Bengal, now residing in Maharashtra, was detained by Pune police on suspicion of being Bangladeshi, despite possessing identity documents and even an ID card from the All India Matua Mahasangha signed by Union Minister Santanu Thakur.

With the CAA rules notified in 2024, allowing persecuted non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, who entered India before December 31, 2014, to apply for citizenship, the BJP is now in overdrive, attempting to both rebuild trust and correct course after initial confusion.

Many applicants had earlier tried to apply online but dropped out midway after realising they lacked valid documentation. The Mahasangha is playing a leading role in the campaign.

"These camps will be held across West Bengal, not just in refugee belts. It's not just about Matuas, every persecuted Hindu has a stake in this. Over the next few months, we aim to reach 1.5 crore people," said Mahitosh Baidya, general secretary of the Mahasangha.

In Bagda, saffron-clad volunteers help

Stating that he will bow down to the court's conviction, Prajwal said, "I have a family, I have not seen my mother and father for six months now....please give me a less sentence is what I request the court."

"The only mistake I made in my life is growing fast in politics," Prajwal, arrested in May last year upon his arrival from Germany, told the court.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) which probed the case had filed a 1,632-page charge sheet with 113 witnesses in the case in September, 2024. (PTI)

elderly applicants fill forms under BJP tents. Mobile booths move from village to village. "As per CAA's 10-D clause, no persecuted non-Muslim refugee who entered India before 31 December 2014 can be expelled for lack of documents. That is our guarantee," said a BJP leader managing the camps, citing gazette notifications.

"The 'apply first, verify later' model is central to the campaign. Once an online application is submitted and acknowledged, document verification will take place later during district-level hearings. Immediate paperwork is not required, an assurance designed to address longstanding fears. "It is this anxiety we are tackling," said a BJP leader from Gaighata.

"People are scared to even apply. We're saying: take the first step, we will walk with you," he said.

The Mahasangha, led by Union Minister Santanu Thakur, has emerged as a full partner in the effort. At a student-youth conference in Thakurnagar, the Matua spiritual nerve centre, he announced volunteer training programmes to assist with filing applications, issuing affidavits, and verifying religious identity.

Thakur alleged, "The Bengal government is deleting Matua names from electoral rolls in places like Bagda and Gaighata. And now, they are crying about Bengali pride? Matuas were promised the CAA. The Centre has delivered. The state must cooperate." (PTI)



## Jiribam killings: Tribal organisations claim arrested persons have no criminal history

**IMPHAL, Aug 2:** Two tribal organisations in Manipur on Saturday expressed concerns over the arrest of two persons, belonging to the Hmar community, in connection with the killings of six Meitei people in Jiribam district last year, claiming that the accused had no criminal history.

These tribal entities also alleged that the arrests by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Assam Police were "unjustified".

Churachandpur district-based Hmar Women Association, in a statement, said, "Deeply concerned with the arbitrary arrest of Thanglienal Hmar and Lalrosang Hmar by Assam Police and NIA. They are fathers, daily wage earners and individuals with no recorded history of criminal activities."

Thanglienal Hmar, a resident of Moinathol Dikshosh Ghaat in Assam's Cachar district, was arrested by a joint team of the Assam Police and the NIA on Thursday.

Lalrosang Hmar, hailing from the same village, was apprehended in Mizoram's capital, Aizawl.

Strongly condemning the arrests,



the association accused the NIA of "employing arbitrary and discriminatory tactics".

The women's organisation also demanded the immediate release of the two arrested persons.

Another organisation Kuki Zo Council, in a statement, claimed that Thanglienal Hmar is an "innocent boatman and has no involvement in the crime".

"His arrest appears to be arbitrary and unjustified, raising serious concerns about due process and fairness in the investigation, it added.

The day these six Meitei persons were abducted in November last

year, 10 suspected militants were killed in an encounter with security forces, and their bodies were later sent to Assam for post-mortem examination.

This incident fueled existing ethnic conflict between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups, which began spreading to Assam.

The Assam government had subsequently increased security arrangements along the border.

The Union Home Ministry transferred the case to the NIA in December last year, and the central agency identified several individuals for their alleged involvement in the killings. (PTI)

## Tipra Motha delegation meets Shah, urges implementation of Tiprasa Accord

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Aug 2:** Tipra Motha Party founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Friday to press for the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord.

An eight-member delegation led by Pradyot included Member of Parliament Kirti Devi Debbarma, TTAADC Chief Executive Member Purna Chandra Jamatia, Minister of State Brishaketu Debbarma, MLAs Ranjit Debbarma and Philip Kumar Reang, and District Council Member Saudagar Kalai.

Sharing details of the meeting on social media, Pradyot wrote: "Had a very good meeting with Home Minister Shri Amit Shah and discussed the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord for the people of our state."

He further added, "The Home Minister assured us that he will personally ensure the Government of India's commitment to the Tiprasa people is upheld."

## Sikkim CM chairs review meeting of SHLC on ethnographic study of 12 left out communities



**GANGTOK, Aug 2:** Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Saturday chaired the final review meeting of the State High Level Committee (SHLC) on ethnographic study of 12 left out communities.

The Sikkim government had set up a 12-member committee late last year to conduct a study and make recommendations to the Centre for the inclusion of 12 communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs).

The Anthropological Survey of India Director BV Sharma and

JNU professor Mahendra P Lama are the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee.

"Today, I chaired the final review meeting on the ethnographic reports of 12 left out communities of Sikkim at Samman Bhawan," Tamang said in a social media post.

These reports under preparation by the SHLC after months of detailed research and consultation mark an important step towards securing the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for 12 left out communities in Sikkim, the CM said.

The chief minister said that it is for the first time that the unique history, culture, and identity of these 12 communities - Bhujel, Gurung, Jogi, Khas, Kirat Rai, Kirat Dewan Yakha, Majhi, Mangar, Newar, Sanyasi, Sunuwar (Mukhia), and Thami - have been comprehensively documented.

"I am proud that these reports which are aimed at fulfilling the criteria required for inclusion in the ST list by addressing all queries raised by central agencies in the past," he said.

Tamang said that it has been resolved to finalise the reports at the earliest for submission to the Government of India so that the formal process for ST recognition could be initiated expeditiously.

"These reports are living testaments to our collective heritage and a celebration of our unity in diversity," the chief minister said, adding that he was optimistic that the ongoing efforts will bear fruit and bring Sikkim closer to the vision of an inclusive and 'Viksit Bharat' 2047. (PTI)

## Rio virtually inaugurates 51 school infrastructures

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Aug 2:** In a significant move to strengthen the education sector in Nagaland, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Saturday virtually inaugurated 51 school infrastructure funded under Samagra Shiksha.

The virtual inauguration of the 51 school infrastructure included 15 new school buildings, additional classrooms in 17 schools, 18 teachers' quarters and one residential hostel spread across the state.

Speaking at the inauguration programme, held at the chief minister's residential complex in Kohima, Rio said it was a significant step in the ongoing journey to strengthen education infrastructure. He extended his gratitude to the Government of India for the continued support.

He also commended the efforts of the Samagra Shiksha team led by the state mission director L Jamithung Lotha.

Noting that many of the school infrastructures in the state are temporary, Rio underscored the urgent need for permanent structures with quality workmanship.

While appreciating the school education department for its constant improvement despite the challenges, he asked it to conduct a comprehensive study and identify its needs and requirements.

## Women's group protests against attempted rape, murder on mother of four

**KOHIMA, Aug 2:** People from various walks of life, most of them women, joined a protest rally held by Northern Angami Women Organisation (NAWO) here on Saturday, to condemn the incident of attempted rape and assault of a mother of four children.

The rally was held at Razhu Point in Kohima.

The 19-year-old accused, a resident of a village under Kohima district, allegedly attacked a woman on July 16 near Botsa village while returning from the field. He is currently in judicial custody.

Shops and business establishments in the state capital remained shut during the protest as a mark of solidarity.

Protestors carried placards and banners demanding justice and the

severest punishment under the law for the accused. They also marched to the office of the deputy commissioner of Kohima to submit a memorandum.

In their representation, NAWO strongly condemned the brutal crime, describing it as a premeditated attack.

According to the memorandum, the accused waylaid the victim while she was returning from her field, assaulted her with a knife, and attempted to rape and kill her.

The woman suffered multiple stab wounds on her neck, arm, and behind her ear before a passerby intervened. The accused fled the scene then.

He was later apprehended by local youths and handed over to the police.

The NAWO urged the authorities to ensure a foolproof investigation and

cautioned against granting bail to the accused.

They highlighted the alarming trend of acquittals in crimes against women and emphasised the need for a strong and effective criminal justice system.

"This cowardly and inhumane act is not just an assault on one woman but an attack on the safety and dignity of all women," the memorandum stated.

NAWO demanded the strictest legal punishment and protective measures for the victim and her family, stating that the accused "does not deserve a place in a civilised society".

The women's body reiterated its faith in the law enforcement agencies but insisted that justice must be visible and swift. (PTI)

## Meghalaya govt orders probe into 'misappropriation' of 4,000 MT coal

**SHILLONG, Aug 2:** The Meghalaya government has ordered an investigation into the alleged misappropriation of over 4,000 metric tonnes (MT) of coal in the state, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said on Saturday.

Tynsong, who also holds the Home portfolio, said that instructions have been issued to the district authorities and the police to conduct a thorough inquiry into the matter.

"We have asked deputy commissioners and superintendents of police to investigate if there has been any misappropriation or illegal diversion of coal," the deputy chief minister told PTI.

The directive comes close on the heels of a revelation by a High Court-appointed committee that over 4,000 metric tonnes of coal, already declared as extracted and inventoried, have vanished from two designated storage sites.

The committee, in its latest report to the Meghalaya High Court, said the disappearance raises serious questions about the state's mechanism for monitoring coal stock and preventing illegal transportation.

Tynsong said the government will take action if any wrongdoing is established.

"If there is anything wrong, we will proceed according to the law. Even if it requires us to approach the Supreme Court, we will do so," he added.

The state's probe will focus on tracing both diesel and coal inventories, including movement, documentation, and field verification.

A comprehensive report will be prepared and shared with the court in due course, an official said. (PTI)

### PROVISION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF GOODS CIRCULATING AREA

**E-Tender Notice No.: TSK/**

**Elect/202 Dated: 30-07-2025.**

E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:

**SN.1. Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-906.**

**Brief Description of Item:** At Bhojo:

Provision for improvement of goods circulating area, approach road

along with labour and merchant room. **Tender Value:** ₹21,72,858/-.

**Earnest Money:** ₹43,500/- **SN.2.**

**Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-907.**

**Brief Description of Item:** At Namrup:

Development of Goods circulating area, approach road,

labor and merchant room along with goods office. **Tender Value:**

₹32,65,322/- **Earnest Money:**

₹65,300/- **SN.3. Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-908.**

**Brief Description of Item:** Electrical Works for

Replacement of Conventional Type Panel Interlocking with

electronic interlocking at 3 Stations (Kamarbandha Ait, Namtiali & Selenghat) in Furkating Jn.-

Simaluguri Jn. Section of Tinsukia Division. **Tender Value:** ₹41,71,561/-

**Earnest Money:** ₹83,400/- **SN.4.**

**Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-909.**

**Brief Description of Item:** At North Lakhimpur:

Electrical Works for Renovation of Old ORH and other Structures at North Lakhimpur to

accommodate TRD Staff. **Tender Value:** ₹15,65,261.30/- **Earnest**

**Money:** ₹31,300/- **Date & Time of closing of tender:** 13:00

hrs. of 21-08-2025 & opening at 15:00 hrs. of 21-08-2025.

The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto

13:00 hrs. of 21-08-2025 in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**DRM (Elect), Tinsukia**

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

*Serving Customers With A Smile*

**RAISING OF BOUNDARY WALL WITH PROVISION OF LIGHTING ARRANGEMENT**

**Tender Notice No. DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ-54-25-26; Date: 31-07-2025.**

E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

**Tender No. DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ-54-25-26; Name of Work:** NFR HQ Office

- Raising of boundary wall with provision of lighting arrangement and development of centralized toilet block.

**Advertised Value:** ₹33,22,697/- **Earnest Money:** ₹66,500/-

E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 22-08-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**Dy.CE/PS/Maligaon/HQ**

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

*Serving Customers With A Smile*

**AUCTION NOTICE FOR 12 NOS. SHOPS' PLOTS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF SSE/WORKS/GUWAHATI UNDER DEN/GUWAHATI, LUMDING DIVISION, N.F. RAILWAY**

**AUCTION NOTICE NO. E-OFFICE-122214 (Guwahati)**

**DATE OF OPENING: 25-08-2025**

Sealed quotations are invited from the interested person(s) against Auction for the 12 Nos. shop plots of Railway land at Guwahati within the jurisdiction of SSE/W/Guwahati under DEN/Guwahati, for a period of 05 (five) years as per Rly Board's Letter No. 2021/LML/25/5 dtd. 04-10-2022 subject to condition with the existing licensee/owner will have the right of first refusal. The auction will be closed at 15:00 Hrs on 25-08-2025 and opened on the same day at 15:30 Hrs. In the office of the DEN/Guwahati (Dy. CE/Estate/Maligaon), N. F. Railway. Quotations received beyond the time limit will not be entertained.

Auction documents can be obtained from the office of the DEN/Guwahati (Dy.CE/Estate/Maligaon) during the office working hours. (Except Saturday, Sunday/Holiday) w.e.f. 04-08-2025 to 25-08-2025 up to 11.00 hrs on submission of application alongwith Receipt of the Station earning for this purpose or DD in favour of FA&CAO /N.F. Railway/Maligaon payable at Maligaon amount of Rs.1000/- (Cost of tender Documents) Total Rs 1000/- (One thousand only) which is non-refundable.

The complete information along with details of terms & conditions are mentioned in the Auction document which is available at the above mentioned office.

**Divisional Engineer/Guwahati**

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

*Serving Customers With A Smile*

## IAF airlifts essential items to Manipur villages cut off by landslides

**IMPHAL, Aug 2:** The Indian Air Force airlifted 5,300 kg of essential items, including rice and pulses, to Manipur's Churachandpur district, parts of which have been cut off due to landslides, a defence statement said on Saturday.

Nine challenging sorties were undertaken by Mi-17 helicopters to deliver the relief materials to Henglep sub-division of Churachandpur, it said.

In the last one week, incessant rainfall triggered more than 90 landslides,



particularly between Chiangpi and Tuilaphai, cutting off access to numerous remote villages, officials said.

Several communities were isolated, resulting in critical shortages of food,

medicine, and other essential supplies, they said.

Following this, the state government sought the IAF's assistance for reaching the essential items to Santing, Saichang, and adjoining villages, they added.

Meanwhile, multiple agencies, including the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), are working to clear the debris and restore the road connectivity in the region, officials said. (PTI)

## 2 Red Panda cubs born at Himalayan Zoological Park, Bulbuley, after seven years

**GANGTOK, Aug 2:** Two Red Panda cubs were born in the Himalayan Zoological Park (HZIP), Bulbuley near Gangtok, after seven years, an official statement said.

The cubs were born to parents Lucky(II) and Mirak. This is the pair's first litter together and marks a significant milestone in the park's conservation efforts, it said.



A statement issued by the Park on Friday said that the birth of the cubs recently is especially heartening as it comes after a difficult period in the Red Panda Conservation programme's history - a seven-year gap in successful births due to challenges like the two outbreaks of canine distemper that nearly decimated the captive red panda population.

Initiated in 1997, HZIP's Conservation Breeding Programme began with a pair of red pandas—Preeti from Rotterdam Zoo and Jugal from Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling. Their successful breeding laid the foundation for a thriving genetic lineage. In 2005, the programme was further strengthened with the inclusion of a wild-origin pair,

Lucky and Ram, helping expand and diversify the genetic pool, it said.

The statement said that all red pandas born under this programme are tracked through national and international studbooks to ensure healthy genetic variability and global breeding cooperation.

Red pandas typically breed in the winter months between November and January. After a gestation period of around five months, females give birth between June and August, in warm, hidden

nests. Remarkably, both Lucky(II) and Mirak were observed participating in nest-building—a rare instance of male involvement. However, cub-rearing remains the mother's responsibility, who teaches the young to climb and forage. Any disturbance by predators or humans can result in the cubs being abandoned at this vulnerable age, said the statement.

It said that the cubs will be raised by their parents away from the public eye until they are old enough for viewing. These new cubs will stay with their mother for over a year, reaching full size by 12 months and becoming sexually mature by 18 months. Their health and compatibility will then be assessed as part of future breeding strategies. (PTI)

### GOVT. OF ASSAM

#### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER;

**P.W.D. KADT BUILDING DIVISION**

**DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG**

### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer, PWD Karbi Anglong District Territorial Building Division, Diphu Karbi Anglong on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites sealed tender/Bid from the registered PWD Contractors of Class-III & above of PWD (R&B), Hills, Diphu for the following work. The details may be seen in the Office of the undersigned during office working hours with effect from 07.08.2025 to 18.08.2025 (Up to 2.00 PM)

Selling of Bid/Tender documents will commence from 11.00 AM of 10.08.2025 to 2.00 PM of 18.08.2025. And tender will open at 3.00 PM of 18.08.2025

Sl. No.	Name of work	Bid Amount
1	2	3
1	Construction of District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) Building in Charaideo, Jorhat, Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, Bajali, West Karbi Anglong and Udalguri District (At Diphu, Karbi Anglong District (Ground floor with G+1 provision)	Rs.35,00,000.00

#### Documents to be submitted-

1. Upto date Registration certificate/ Professional Tax clearance certificate/ Sale tax, Income tax/VAT, GST clearance certificate/Trading License for non tribal's without which tender will be rejected.
2. KAAC money receipt of Rs.10.00 (Rupees Ten) only per tender.
3. Rates-On flat percentage basis Above/Below/ As per the schedule of rates for for Building (C) works for CPWD (DSR) 2021, Sanitary & Water supply works for CPWD (DSR) for 2021 as well as Electrification works for CPWD (DSR) for 2021.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, PWD

KADT Building Division, Diphu

Date 02.08.2025

Memo No. C/S-05/EE (Bldg)/DPU/2025-26/1158 -A



## Imtiaz Ali's 'Amar Singh Chamkila' bags top nominations at 7th SWA Awards



**MUMBAI, Aug 2:** Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's acclaimed movie, "Amar Singh Chamkila" has bagged major nominations for the best story, screenplay, dialogues and lyrics at the upcoming Screenwriters Association Awards (SWA).

The 7th edition of the SWA awards, to be held on August 9, will honour groundbreaking films, series, and TV shows of 2024 that pushed the envelope of storytelling. "Amar Singh Chamkila", the 2024 musical drama, featured Diljit Dosanjh in the titular role, and Parineeti Chopra as his love interest. Lyricist Irshad Kamil has been nominated for his lyrics for five tracks, "Baaja", "Bol Mohabbat", "Ishq Mitaye", "Naram Kaalja", and "Vida Karo" from "Amar Singh Chamkila".

The other nominees in the best story and screenplay category are Atul Sabharwal for "Berlin", Avinash Sampath for "CTRL", Karan Gour for "Fairy Folk", and Kunal Kemmu for "Madgaon Express". Comedian-writer Sumukhi Suresh has been nominated in the best dialogue category for "CTRL" alongside Gour for "Fairy Folk", Devang Tiwari and Amit Pradhan for "Jo Tera

Hai Woh Mera Hai", Niren Bhatt for "Stree 2", and Kemmu for "Madgaon Express".

The nominees for the Best Debut category include Shuchi Talati for "Girls Will Be Girls", produced by Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal. The film has also bagged nominations in the Best Lyrics TV/Web category for Anvita Dutt for "Big Girls Don't Cry" title track and Shashwat Sachdev for the song "Pehli Sharam". Writers Biplob Goswami and Sneha Desai for "Laapataa Ladies", and Bodhayan Roychoudhury for "Sector 36" are nominated in the Best Debut category as well.

Sagar has been nominated in the Best Lyrics category for the song, "Tu Hai Toh" from "Mr. & Mrs. Mahi", which featured Rajkumar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor.

OTT Shows such as "Freedom at Midnight", Gyaarah Gyaarah", "Lootere", "Maharani 3", and "IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack" have been nominated in the Best Screenplay and Best Dialogue web-drama category.

Fan-favourite titles like "Panchayat 3" and "Gullak 4" have bagged nominations in the Best Story, Screenplay and Dialogue categories. (PTI)

## A REMINDER THAT WHAT I DO MATTERS: SHAH RUKH KHAN ON WINNING NAT'L FILM AWARD

**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** Superstar Shah Rukh Khan says he was "overwhelmed with gratitude, pride and humility" after being named best actor at the 71st National Film Awards, his first win at the prestigious film honours in a career spanning over three decades.

In a video message on Instagram on Friday, the 59-year-old actor said the National Film Award serves as a reminder that his work "matters" and encourages him to "keep going, working hard, keep creating and keep serving cinema".

Shah Rukh, who shared the award with "12th Fail" actor Vikrant Massey, was rewarded for his performance in filmmaker Atlee's action drama "Jawan" (2023). The movie, which minted over Rs 1,100 crore at the worldwide box office, was a high-octane thriller and featured SRK in the dual role of Army officer Vikram Rathore and his jailor son Azad. "I am overwhelmed with gratitude, pride and humility. To be honored with the National Award is a moment that I will cherish for a lifetime," he said in the video message.

In the video, the actor's right hand was in a sling following an injury he sustained while shooting for his upcoming film "King". "A national award is not just about achievement. It's a reminder that what I do matters. It tells me to keep going, keep working hard, keep creating and keep serving cinema."

"In a world full of noise to be heard, truly heard, is a blessing. And I promise to use this recognition, not as a finish line, but as fuel to continue striving, learning and giving back. This award is a reminder for me that acting is not just work but a responsibility, to show the truth on the screen. I am grateful for all the love," Shah Rukh said.

The actor extended his thanks to the award jury, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, and his recent collaborators -- directors Rajkumar Hirani ("Dunki"), Siddharth Anand ("Pathaan") and especially Atlee.

"Thanks to Atlee sir and his team for giving me the opportunity in 'Jawan' and

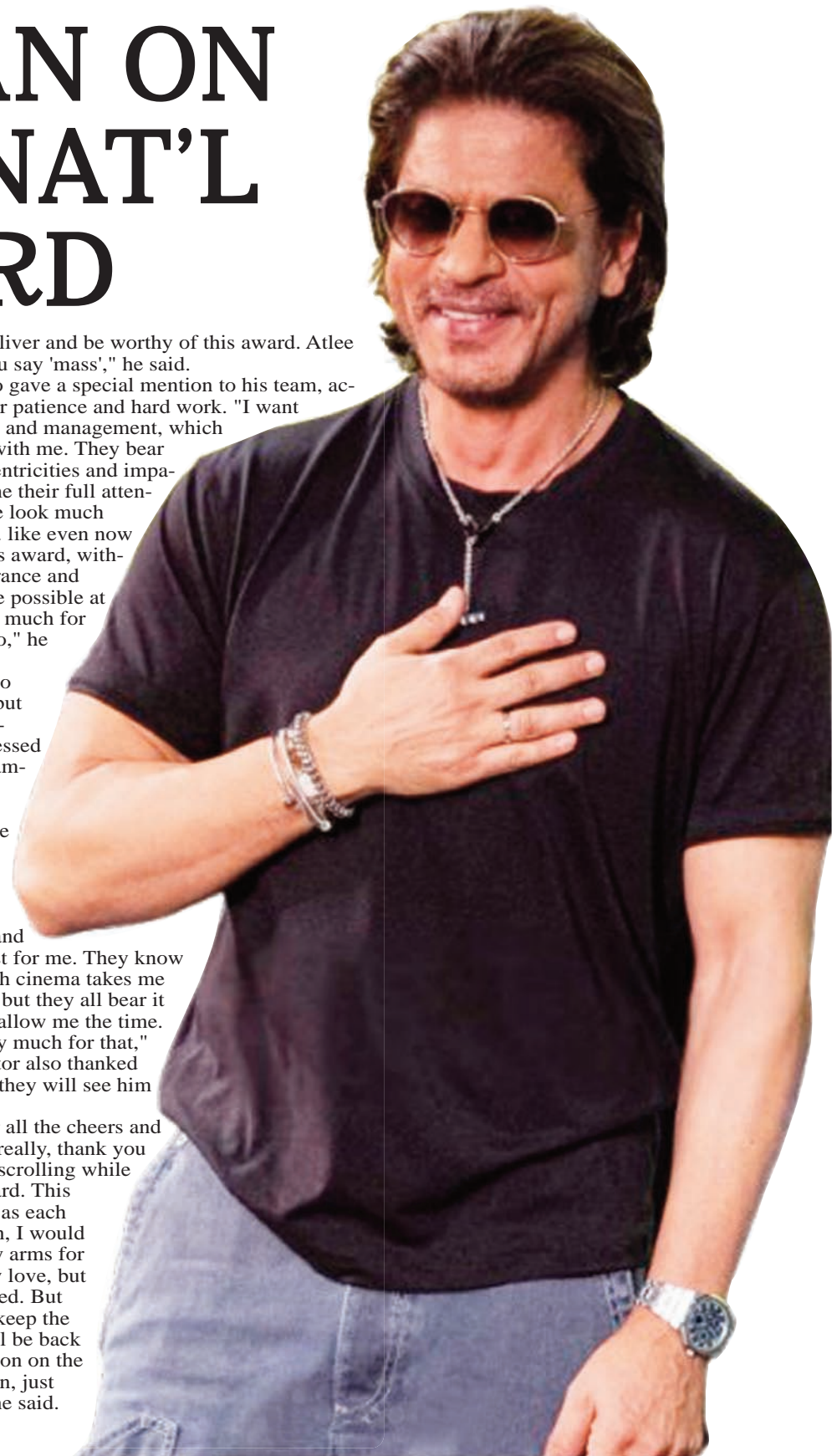
trusting me to deliver and be worthy of this award. Atlee sir, this is like you say 'mass'," he said.

Shah Rukh also gave a special mention to his team, acknowledging their patience and hard work. "I want to thank my team and management, which works tirelessly with me. They bear with me, my eccentricities and impatience and give me their full attention and make me look much better than I am... like even now in this video. This award, without their perseverance and love would not be possible at all. Thank you so much for everything you do," he said.

Shah Rukh, who made his film debut with 1992's "Deewana", also expressed gratitude to his family.

"My wife and kids who, over the last few years, give me so much more love and care as if I'm the kid in the house and want only the best for me. They know my obsession with cinema takes me away from them, but they all bear it with a smile and allow me the time. So thank you very much for that," he added. The actor also thanked his fans and said they will see him on screen soon.

"Thank you for all the cheers and all the tears, and really, thank you for pausing your scrolling while watching my award. This award is for you, as each award is and yeah, I would love to spread my arms for you and share my love, but I'm a bit indisposed. But don't worry, just keep the popcorn ready. I'll be back in theaters and soon on the screen. So till then, just with one hand," he said. (PTI)



## This is first ever in 30-year career: Rani Mukerji on winning Nat'l Award

**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** Actor Rani Mukerji on Friday said winning her first National Film Award for "Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway" validates not just her career of three decades but also her dedication to her craft and cinema.

Mukerji was named as the winner in the 'Best Actress' category at the 71st National Awards, which were announced on Friday. The awards honoured the best films of 2023.

The actor received the award for her performance in "Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway". Directed by Ashima Chibber, the film was released in March 2023.

"I'm overwhelmed to have won the National Award for my performance in 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway'. Incidentally, this is the first ever National Award in my 30-year career. As an actor, I have been fortunate to have some incredible films in my body of work and have got so much love for them. I thank the National Award jury for honouring my work in 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway'," the actor said in a statement.

"I share this moment with the entire team of the film, my producers Nikkhil Advani, Monisha and Madhu, my director Ashima Chibber, and everyone who worked on this truly special project that celebrated the resilience of motherhood. For me, this award is also a validation of my 30-year body of work, my dedication to my craft with which I feel a deeply spiritual connection and my passion for cinema and this beautiful film industry of ours," the 47-year-old actor added.

"Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway" also starred Jim Sarbh and revolved around Debika Chatterjee (Mukerji), an Indian woman staying in Norway with her family, who fights to regain custody of her children after she is separated from them by the Norwegian authorities. (PTI)



## John Abraham's 'Tehran' to release on ZEE5 on August 14

**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** "Tehran", headlined by Bollywood star John Abraham, will stream on ZEE5 from August 14. Inspired by true events, "Tehran" is written by Ritesh Shah and Ashish Prakash Verma, and marks the feature directorial debut of ad filmmaker Arun Gopalan. It also stars Manushi Chhillar, Neeru Bajwa and Madhurima Tuli. The film "dives into the shadowy world of international espionage where one man's allegiance could tip the balance between loyalty and betrayal," according to a press release. The story draws inspiration from the 2012 bomb explosion near the Israeli Embassy in Delhi, a real-life incident that spiraled into complex diplomatic ripples. Amidst this, ACP Rajeev Kumar (Abraham) is pulled into a covert operation that spans continents, ideologies, and fractured alliances, the lines between right and wrong begin to blur. Abraham said he had one of the most intense and layered roles of his career in "Tehran". "Tehran is a truly global film—rooted in real events but resonating far beyond borders. Playing ACP Rajeev Kumar in 'Tehran' has been one of the most intense and layered roles of my career as he is not your conventional patriot. He's a man constantly torn between duty and conscience, and that moral conflict is what makes this story so compelling," he said in the statement. "This film isn't about good versus evil—it's about navigating the grey. I'm proud to be part of a project that dares to explore these complexities, and I can't wait for audiences to experience it this Independence Day on ZEE5. I am also thankful to ZEE5 for giving a global platform to this film because in all honesty, Tehran is India's first international film," he added. (PTI)

## Very surreal: Rebecca Romijn on returning as Mystique in 'Avengers: Doomsday'



**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** Hollywood star Rebecca Romijn says she was surprised to receive a call to be part of the superhero ensemble film "Avengers: Doomsday" and reprise the fan-favourite role of mutant Mystique from the "X-Men" movies.

Romijn, who stars in the third season of her popular show "Star Trek: Strange New Worlds" currently streaming on JioHotstar, said she is in the midst of filming for the much-awaited project and the whole experience has been "wonderful" so far.

"Very surreal. It was a call that was very unexpected for me and very thrilling. We're currently shooting and filming now and it's been wonderful so far," Romijn told PTI in an interview.

The 52-year-old actor originated the role of Mystique in the "X-Men" trilogy in the 2000s, portraying the shape-shifting mutant with a mix of cunningness and menace.

Romijn first played the part in

2000's "X-Men", followed by "X2" (2003), and "X-Men: The Last Stand" (2006). She also made a brief cameo in "X-Men: First Class", in which Jennifer Lawrence took over the character from her.

In "Doomsday", she is returning along with a host of legacy "X-Men" characters -- Patrick Stewart as Charles Xavier aka Professor X, Ian McKellen as Magneto, Kelsey Grammer as Hank McCoy aka Beast, Alan Cumming as Nightcrawler and James Marsden as Scott Summers aka Cyclops.

The movie, which will mark the return of "Iron Man" star Robert Downey Jr in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) but in the avatar of supervillain Victor Von Doom aka Doctor Doom, will come out in theatres in December 2027.

"Star Trek: Strange New Worlds" features Romijn as Commander Una Chin-Riley, also known as Number One, the highly capable first officer

aboard the USS Enterprise, serving under Captain Christopher Pike, played by actor Anson Mount.

As a mother, Romijn said she consciously picks roles that serve as positive role models for her daughters and young girls watching globally. "I am a mother of girls and so it's very important to choose roles that are positive role models for my daughters and for other young ladies around the world. And I take it into consideration. I don't take it lightly, especially when I'm leaving my daughters to go away on location and have to be away from them for long periods of time."

The actor, also known for films like "The Punisher", "Femme Fatale" and "Man About Town", said she aims to take on work she can be proud of, especially character she'll feel good about sharing with her children.

"I want to be proud of the work that I get to come back and show

them... especially within the 'Star Trek' and genres of science fiction and comic book... I really enjoy playing female characters that are multifaceted and often just as strong as the male characters. It's important to me," she said.

Romijn said both Una and Mystique are "mutants to a certain extent" but they deal with their identities in very different ways.

"There are a lot of similarities between playing the mutant Mystique and playing a genetically modified character on Star Trek. They're both mutants to a certain extent. With Mystique, the difference is that she chose to not hide who she actually is and Una chose to hide her mutation."

"But the big difference is that Una chose to hide it until she was forced to go to trial and get cleared for it. And Mystique has chosen to not hide it and let that drive her," she said, adding that Mystique is a "more dangerous character". (PTI)



# RILING UP ROOT WAS PART OF INDIA'S PLANS: PRASIDH

**LONDON, Aug 2:** India pacer Prasidh Krishna relished the banter with 'good mate' Joe Root on day two of the fifth and final Test and said riling up England's batting mainstay was part of the team's plans.

Prasidh and Root had a tense moment that required interventions from the umpires. The usually composed Root reacted animatedly and was clearly not amused with Prasidh's comments following a boundary in the 22st over.

"Well, it was a very small thing. I think it was just a competitive edge amongst us that was coming out. Both of us are good mates off the field. It was just a little bit of a banter and both of us enjoyed it," said Prasidh in the post-day press conference.

The Karnataka man also hinted that the lip service to Root was not entirely by accident.

"That was also the plan. But I didn't really expect a couple of words that I said to get such a big reaction from him. But like I said, I love the guy that he is. He's a legend of the game.

"And for him to come out there, it's great when two people are out



there wanting to do their best," said Prasidh, who took a four-wicket haul alongside Mohammed Siraj to script India's impressive comeback after the onslaught of Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley in

the first session.

A bit of chatter with the opposition batter tends to get the best out of him, Prasidh revealed.

"I try and enjoy bowling if it means that I have a bit of a chatter

with the batsman. And it does help me when the batsman also is, I can get under the nerves and get a reaction from him. And I think I was just running in well," said the lanky fast bowler.

What was the chat among the pacers after being blown away in the morning?

"As a team we knew what happened before lunch and the three fast bowlers, I think we got together in a small corner and decided, what's happened has happened," he said.

"And all of us know what we need to be doing and we just said, every time we are on the field, at the mark, we trust each other enough, go speak to each other, tell them if you're not on the right track, and just make sure you're bowling the right lines and take it from there.

"And as a team as well, we spoke about the same thing. Like, if the next three, two hours, if we can show some body language, I think it's going to make a big difference and it made a big difference."

The 29-year-old noted that when the batters are going ballistic like the ones from England tend to do, it is important to maintain the right lines and lengths.

"I think they are playing a lot of shots and as a bowling unit, it's very hard for us to keep bowling the same areas, knowing they're

going to do all kinds of things and try to score runs. But that's the challenge in itself.

"If you can still come there and know what your lengths and lines are and keep bowling the same good balls again and again, I think it's a matter of time. And that's the challenge, to be able to bowl the good lengths in spite of the aggressive intent of the batsman."

A smiling India pacer Akash Deep gave a rather unusual send off to Ben Duckett, wrapping his arm around the England opener, a move that he clearly did not enjoy.

England batting coach Marcus Trescothick said there was no need for the Indian pacer to act like that.

"Many in my time would have just dropped the elbow on him or something quite different. I don't think I've ever seen a bowler do that after getting someone out. Obviously, you see them having many words; you've seen it in this series on both sides. It was just different for me; I was just laughing and joking about it.

"It is what it is. You put your head down and walk off, your job is done at that point. There is no need to walk him off in that fashion," said Trescothick. (PTI)

Aaron Rai in second spot as play is suspended; Bhatia and Theegala exit Wyndham early



**GREENSBORO (USA), Aug 2:** Defending champion Aaron Rai stayed in strong title contention as he reached 13-under through 13 holes in the second round of the Wyndham Championship, the final event of the regular season on the PGA Tour ahead of the FedExCup play-offs.

Rai was 7-under 63 in the first round and he was 6-under through 13 holes in the second.

He was one shot behind Cameron Young (63 and 7-under through 15 in the second) at the Sedgefield Country Club.

The weather was mostly cloudy and humid with afternoon thunderstorms. The second round was suspended due to a dangerous weather situation at 4:32 p.m., with the entire afternoon wave yet to complete their round. Play was scheduled the following day.

When the second round was suspended for the day some of the players withdrew. Among them was Akshay Bhatia, who was 5-over for the tournament at that stage and was sure to miss the cut.

Sahith Theegala missed the cut with 72-74 and he will now miss the Play-offs after having made the Tour Championship last year.

He will get back to action after the Play-offs, which begins with the Procore Championship next month.

At the time of the suspension, Cameron Young held the solo lead at 14-under one shot ahead of 2024 Wyndham champion Aaron Rai.

Mac Meissner and Sungjae Im, who played in the morning wave, finished their rounds at 12-under.

Rai trails Young by one stroke and if he moves into the lead/co-lead when the second round is complete, he would become the first defending champion at the Wyndham Championship to do so after 36 holes since Mike Souchak in 1962.

He is seeking to become the first player to successfully defend at the Wyndham Championship since Sam Snead in 1956. Rai, who skipped the 3M Open, is a certainty for the Play-offs and is looking at improving his position to try and get into the second event for

Top-50 and the Tour Championship which is for Top-30.

In the second round he began with three birdies on the trot and added a fourth on the fifth. Birdies on the 10th and the 12th took him to 6-under and he had five more holes to play when play was suspended.

Interestingly, Rai's maiden PGA Tour title was at Wyndham last year and in 2010 India's Arjun Atwal had won the same event. (PTI)

## Ex-Olympic champ Rowdy Gaines calls for changes at USA Swimming as team struggles in Singapore



**SINGAPORE, Aug 2:** Rowdy Gaines, a three-time Olympic gold medalist, minces few words when he broadcasts swimming for the American network NBC.

And he didn't hold back in an interview with The Associated Press over the shaky state of American swimming. He's calling for big-time changes as the Americans struggle at the world championships in Singapore.

The American team isn't winning as much as expected or dominating, it's battling a case of "acute gastroenteritis" picked up at training camp in Thailand before arriving in Singapore, and the governing body — USA Swimming — has been without a CEO for a year.

Gaines called the body "rudderless." "Can you imagine any corporation going for a year without a CEO?" Gaines asked.

Underwhelming AmericansThe Americans were also underwhelming a year ago at the Paris Olympics. They led the medal table, but won only eight gold medals, the lowest total since the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

"We're far from killing it," said Gaines in a telephone interview from the United States. "It's a major struggle and we can't hide our heads in the sand and say this is just a blip." Gaines said he's been texting frequently with Greg Meehan, the national team director who was appointed four months ago. Meehan is also the head coach in Singapore.

The American haven't said how many swimmers have fallen ill, but in an interview Meehan said "the overwhelming majority of the team has gone through something" at the championship.

"Greg and I have been going back and forth in a very good way, very positive," Gaines said.

He called Meehan a good choice and said he's had too little time to turn things around. Gaines also pointed out that the focus is the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. These world championships, less so.

"I think he's (Meehan) going to be great," Gaines said. "He's got that calm reserve. He had great success at Stanford. He's coached some of the best swimmers ever. I think he's a good choice, he's just walking into a bit of a landmine."

Thailand training campLike many, Gaines questioned why the Americans picked Thailand as a training camp site and noted that global swimming now has dozens of countries that can beat the Americans, and many of their elite athletes train in the States.

Those include the two stars in Singapore: Frenchman Léon Marchand and Canadian Summer McIntosh. Marchand trains at the University of Texas at Austin, and McIntosh will be there this fall and join Bob Bowman's training group.

Bowman is, of course, the former coach of American swimming legend Michael Phelps. (AP)

## Dagar makes cut at AIG Women's Open, lies 28th

**PORHCRAWL (WALES), Aug 2:** Indian golfer Diksha Dagar handled the changing temperature conditions well enough to shoot 1-over 73, ensuring her place in the weekend rounds of the AIG Women's Open.

Dagar, who carded 1-under in the first round, is now even par for two rounds and Tied-28th going into the final two rounds.

Making her sixth Open appearance, Dagar is making the cut for a second time with Tied-21st finish in 2023 being her best.

Japan's Miyu Yamashita produced a bogey-free second round to reach 11-under-par through 36 holes to take a commanding three-shot lead.

The 23-year-old Yamashita fired a bogey-free seven-under-par for the best round of the day.

In weather conditions that saw the temperature change a lot, Dagar did well in the middle of the round at the demanding Royal



Porthcawl Golf Club. Dagar dropped shots on the third and the sixth. She made up for those losses with an eagle on the Par-5 ninth and turned in even par.

The roller coaster ride continued as she bogeyed the tenth but gained birdies on the 12th and the 13th. With scoring being difficult, she was even sniffing at a Top-10

place. Then came bogeys on the 14th and the 16th and she did well to ensure there was no more damage.

The two-time LET winner Dagar has been showing good form ahead of the second half of the busy season that includes her home event, the Women's Indian Open, where she has come close to

## Spurs captain Son Heung-min to leave Premier League club amid LAFC interest

**SEOUL, Aug 2:** After 10 years with Tottenham, captain Son Heung-min announced on Saturday that he plans to leave the English Premier League club.

Son, who helped Spurs win the Europa League title in May, said it was "the most difficult" decision of his career and added the club was supporting him as he looks to find another team, with Los Angeles FC a possible landing spot.

The 33-year-old South Korea international will start against Newcastle in a preseason friendly Sunday in Seoul in what could be his final match with the team.

Son, who scored 173 goals in 454 competitive appearances for Tottenham, opened the news conference by announcing he has "decided to leave this club in this summer" and that Spurs are "helping me to my decisions."

"I came to north London as a kid, 23 years old, very young age, a young boy came to London who

even didn't speak English and leaving this club as a grown man is a very, very proud moment," said Son, who fought back tears during his announcement.

"So I just want to say thank you to all of the Spurs fans," he added, "that gave me so much love and felt like it was my home. It was one of the toughest decisions I ever made.... But I think it's the right time to make this decision."

Son was asked in Korean about his future playing plans, and he replied: "I don't think I have an answer yet."

He has been heavily linked with a move to LAFC, and there is reported interest from Saudi Arabian clubs.

Son also confirmed in Korean that he would play at the World Cup next summer in North America.

In May, Son finally won his first title in Europe when Tottenham defeated Manchester United in the Europa League final — the club's first major trophy since 2008. After that

match, he said: "I felt the pressure. I wanted it so badly. It finally happened, and I can sleep easy now."

Son added that the team's recent success was a factor in his decision. "Winning the Europa League made me feel I had achieved everything I could here," he said. "I need a new environment for a fresh challenge."

Son had been one of the biggest stars of the Premier League as he and Harry Kane became a formidable attacking partnership. Tottenham reached the Champions League final in 2019, losing to Liverpool.

After Kane's departure to Bayern Munich in 2023, Son was made captain by former head coach Ange Postecoglou.

Thomas Frank succeeded Postecoglou in June and the Danish coach paid tribute to Son on Saturday. "He is truly a Spurs legend in every aspect," Frank said. "One of the best players to ever play in the Premier League, in my opinion, as a

winger. I think it is probably the perfect timing, going out on a high."

Son is No. 5 on Tottenham's all-time goalscoring list, led by Kane (280 goals). Among other impressive stats, Son's 333 Premier League appearances is second-most in club history, trailing only Hugo Lloris (361).

Later in the news conference, Son reiterated he has not decided on his next club. But he said next year's World Cup is his No. 1 priority for his home country.

"I think I can share more about my future after tomorrow's game once things become more certain," he said. "My most important priority right now is the World Cup. It's likely to be my last World Cup and I want to give everything I have in that environment. I want to be able to play football happily, which I think will play the biggest role in my future decision-making. I am still trying to organize my thoughts around that." (AP)

## Sweetie Devi eyes better prep with more friendlies before Asian Cup challenge

**UDAIPUR, Aug 2:** With India set to play 12 international friendlies in the build-up to the AFC Women's Asian Cup, seasoned centre-back Sweetie Devi Ngambam believes the added exposure will strengthen their dream of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup.

India, ranked 70th in the world, have been placed in a tough Group C alongside Asian heavyweights Japan (7), Vietnam (37), and Chinese Taipei (42) for the continental tournament, to be held in Australia from March 1 to 21, 2026.

"Japan are always a top team, and playing against them is a huge opportunity. We know we must be mentally strong, and we will play to the best of our abilities," Sweetie told PTI Videos during the launch of the Zinc Football Girls Academy in Zawar, near Udaipur.

The All India Football Federation has unveiled an extensive roadmap for the Indian women's team, including 83 days of national camps, 12 international friendlies,

5-7 domestic matches, and an early start to the Indian Women's League 2025-26 season. "The federation has prepared a road map for our season, which begins in March, and we will be playing international friendlies, which are incredibly important. We will try giving our best for the Asia Cup and are focused on qualifying for the World Cup."

India open their Asian Cup campaign against Vietnam on March 4, followed by matches against Japan (March 7) and Chinese Taipei (March 10). "Winning every international match we play is our goal. These friendlies will give us crucial exposure. "The coaches will guide us on the areas we need to improve, and we are committed to giving our full effort," added Sweetie who led India in two matches -- against Mongolia and hosts Thailand during their triumphant campaign at the Asian Cup qualifiers.

She was captain as part of a ro-



tation policy adopted by head coach Crispin Chettri, who announced the captain on matchday mornings and handed over the armband in the dressing room.

India topped Group B in the AFC qualifiers with wins over Thailand, Iraq, Timor-Leste and Mongolia to qualify for the tournament for the first time since 2003.

India were forced to withdraw from the 2022 edition due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the squad.

Sweetie relished the opportunity to captain the national side and sees the Women's World Cup as the ultimate target.

"The captaincy rotation was a great experience. It provided many of us with valuable insights into

team management and fostered a special bond within the squad," she said. "Our main goal is to perform well in the AFC and qualify for the World Cup. If we do so, then I would also look forward to playing in international leagues. My personal goal would be to become the best player in the AFC," she added.

Twelve teams will compete in the Asian Cup and the four group winners will seal World Cup berths directly. The losing teams will enter play-ins for two more spots.

Sweetie also spoke fondly of her long-time teammate and regular skipper Ashalata Devi.

"As for my camaraderie with Ashalata Devi, I've played alongside her for a long time. I started my career with her, and I still miss her." On Thursday, Hindustan Zinc Ltd. in collaboration with the AIF, launched the Zinc Football Girls Academy in Zawar — the country's first technology-driven residential football academy exclusively for girls. (PTI)

## Marseille signs Brazilian winger Paixão from Feyenoord to boost attacking options

**PARIS, Aug 2:** Ligue 1 club Marseille has bolstered its attack by signing Brazilian winger Igor Paixão from Feyenoord in a deal that could rise to 35 million euros (\$40.6 million).

The 25-year-old Paixão scored 18 goals in 47 games last season and was voted the Dutch player of the season. Marseille beat competition from newly promoted Premier League team Leeds to sign him.

Marseille announced the deal late Friday without giving further details, but French media reports valued the deal at 30 million euros with an additional 5 million in performance-related bonuses.

Marseille paid a club-record 32 million euros to Portuguese club Braga to sign forward Vitorino in early 2023. Vitorino failed to settle and scored only six goals in 43 games before being sold to Genoa.

Paixão showed his full repertoire of skills during a Champions League game against AC Milan in February, scoring in a 1-0 win and giving the Milan defense a torrid time all game with his quickness.

Marseille finished second in Ligue 1 last season behind Paris Saint-Germain and qualified directly for the Champions League.

Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi has made several moves in the transfer market this summer, including bringing back veteran striker

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang from Al-Qadiah in the Saudi Pro League. The 36-year-old Aubameyang scored 21 goals for Al-Qadiah last season, after having spent the 2023-24 campaign at Marseille — where he netted 30 goals overall and became a fan favorite in the southern port city. Attacking midfielder Angel Gomes joined from Lille and gritty central defender Facundo Medina arrived from Lens. The arrivals of Aubameyang and Paixão bring extra firepower to an attack that already features Mason Greenwood — who scored 21 league goals last season and Amine Gouiri. Marseille opens the new Ligue 1 season when it travels all the way up the country to face Brittany-based Rennes on Aug. 15. (AP)



# Messi's India tour: Opening leg in Kolkata; Delhi, Mumbai Ahmedabad ready to welcome the icon

**KOLKATA, Aug 2:** If all the pieces fall in place, football devotees in Kolkata will have the first sighting of iconic Lionel Messi after a decade, and the City of Joy will be the first stop in the Argentine's whirlwind journey across Ahmedabad, Mumbai and New Delhi, culminating in a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The sources privy to the development informed PTI that all arrangements have been finalised including booking the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, but an official confirmation from Messi is still awaited.

"It's been finalised and we are waiting for an official announcement from Messi, maybe on his social media handle any time soon," said the source.

"As of now we have agreed on the proposed itinerary and we are just awaiting an official announcement from his social media, which would be in any time soon," the source added. As per the itinerary, Messi will land in Kolkata on the night of December 12 around 10pm and will stay for two days and one night -- the longest stop on his tour.

The Argentina captain's Kolkata schedule on December 13 will begin at 9am with a meet-and-greet event, followed by the unveiling of a 70-foot statue of him at the Lake Town Sribhumi on VIP Road.

Organisers claim this will be the first-ever and tallest statue of the World Cup winner anywhere in the world.

He will then head to Eden Gardens, where the GOAT Concert and GOAT Cup will be held from 12 noon to 1.30pm.

"I don't want to mislead people. So basically, it will be a celebration of Messi, a master class with Messi."

"He will play the GOAT Cup in a seven-side soft-ball, soft-touch game with Sourav Ganguly, Leander Paes, John Abraham, Bhaichung Bhutia among others. It will be a celebration play in respect of Messi," the source explained.

He hoped for a sellout crowd as it will be a fully ticketed event.

"This will be at Eden. It will be a ticketing event. Denominations are yet to be decided. It would be a little expensive -- should not be less than Rs 3,500."

"Entire stadium will be open, so, we can expect a full capacity of 68,000. For 1 hour 20 minutes Messi will be there with musical tribute, masterclass with kids," he added.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is expected to felicitate Messi during the Eden Gardens programme.

On the evening of December 13, Messi is slated to travel to Ahmedabad to attend a private event hosted by the Adani Foundation at their Shantigram headquarters.



He will then reach Mumbai for events on December 14, including a meet-and-greet at CCI at 3.45pm, followed by the GOAT Concert and GOAT Cup at the Wankhede Stadium at 5.30pm.

"We've booked the Wankhede Stadium for the GOAT Cup at 5.45pm on December 14," the source said.

There were media reports suggesting that Messi could participate in a seven-a-

side cricket match with MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli, but the source denied this.

"He is not going to play any cricket match in Mumbai. It will be only soft ball and soft touch with him. It will be a celebration of his journey with the presence of Indian celebrities."

Plans are also in place for Messi to interact with the Indian football team in Mumbai.

"At Mumbai, we have planned an interaction with the Indian football team. Obviously, Sunil Chhetri and the Indian team moment that we have planned in Mumbai as per their respective availabilities," the source said.

On December 15, Messi will be in New Delhi, where he is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, followed by a GOAT Concert and GOAT Cup at Feroz Shah Kotla at 2.15pm.

At each city, Messi will be conducting a "masterclass" with children, aimed at inspiring the next generation of Indian footballers.

"Messi will be imparting masterclass with kids at every centre. The main idea is to celebrate Messi's success, giving little bit, for instance 30 to 40 minutes to motivate the young generation of players. So, masterclass and interaction with Messi."

The source also dispelled rumours of a Kerala leg during Messi's visit.

"However, there will be no event in Kerala as earlier reported," the source said.

Messi is also expected to travel with a large entourage including footballers, though details remain under wraps.

In wee hours of August 31, 2011, Messi made his first appearance in India, landing in Kolkata as hysteric fans gathered at the airport to welcome him.

He was here with his team to play an exhibition match against Venezuela at the Salt Lake Stadium a match they won 1-0.

Messi's arrival sparked "Messi fever" in Kolkata, with thousands of fans lining the streets, donning Messi jerseys, and packing the 75,000-capacity stadium.

**Proposed Itinerary:** December 12: Arrival in Kolkata (10pm).

**December 13 (Kolkata):** 9am -- Meet and greet event; Statue unveiling (70-foot) at Lake Town Sribhumi, VIP Road; 12 noon to 1.30pm -- GOAT Concert at Eden Gardens followed by GOAT Cup; December 13 (Evening): Adani Foundation private event at Shantigram, Ahmedabad.

**December 14 (Mumbai):** Meet and greet at CCI (3.45pm); GOAT Concert at Wankhede Stadium (5.30pm).

**December 15 (New Delhi):** Meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi; GOAT Concert at Feroz Shah Kotla (2.15pm). (PTI)

## Ajay Singh resigns as Interim panel chief; global body prez to attend BFI elections as observer

**NEW DELHI, Aug 2:** Indian boxing's Interim Committee chairman Ajay Singh has stepped down from his post to contest this month's federation elections, where World Boxing President Boris van der Vorst will serve as an observer.

Singh resigned from his post with immediate effect on Friday, a day after the Interim Committee formally announced the election date -- August 21.

"I am pleased to inform you that the elections of the Boxing Federation of India have now been formally announced and are scheduled to be held on 21st August 2025," Singh wrote in a letter dated August 1 and addressed to van der Vorst, a copy of which is in possession of PTI.

"Since I intend to contest the forthcoming elections, I believe it is appropriate and in the interest of fairness and transparency that I step

down from the position of Chairman of the Interim Committee with immediate effect," he added.

World Boxing, which constituted the Interim Committee in April to manage Indian boxing's day-to-day affairs following months of internal unrest, accepted Singh's resignation on Saturday.

In his place, the international body has elevated Singapore Boxing President Fairuz Mohammed, who had been serving as World Boxing's observer in the panel, as the new Interim Committee Chair.

"We respect this decision and hereby appoint Mr. Fairuz Mohammed, President of Singapore Boxing, as Chairman of the Interim Committee to ensure continuity till the new body is elected," van der Vorst stated in a letter.

World Boxing has also confirmed that van der Vorst and acting Secretary General Mike McAtee

will be present as observers during the elections.

"Additionally, we wish to inform you that I, myself, along with Mr. Mike McAtee, Acting Secretary General of World Boxing, will be present in India on 21st August 2025 to act as observers for the BFI elections," van der Vorst wrote.

Singh, who is also the Chairman of SpiceJet Airlines, has already completed two four-year terms as BFI President and is now aiming for a third and final stint, as permitted under the 2011 National Sports Development Code of India.

Anurag Thakur is set to be Singh's primary opponent as it is learnt that Himachal Pradesh Boxing will once again nominate the former Sports Minister's name as its representative.

Thakur had been in the fray when the elections were initially scheduled on March 28 but his name did-

n't figure in the Electoral College finalised by Singh and subsequently approved by the Returning Officer.

Singh had said Thakur was "ineligible" to represent Himachal Pradesh, citing an official directive stating that only "bonafide and duly elected members during the election AGM (duly notified to BFI) of the State Units affiliated with the BFI shall be authorised to represent their respective States/Union Territories."

Thakur's exclusion had led his faction to initiate legal proceedings, which is still ongoing.

The much-delayed BFI elections will mark a return to a elected body for Indian boxing after months of uncertainty, internal strife, and legal setbacks that had delayed the process.

World Boxing had earlier set a deadline of August 31 for the elections to be completed. (PTI)

**MACAU, Aug 2:** India's campaign at the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end on Saturday after Lakshya Sen and Tharun Manneppalli suffered semifinal defeats in their respective men's singles matches.

Lakshya, a 2021 world championship bronze medalist and reigning Commonwealth Games champion, couldn't match the pace and precision of Indonesia's Alwi Farhan, going down 16-21 9-21 in a 39-minute contest to continue his patchy run that has seen him struggle with form and fitness this season.

In the other semifinal, India's Tharun Manneppalli went down fighting against Malaysia's Justin Hoh in a gripping three-game contest that lasted an hour and 21 minutes. The 23-year-old Manneppalli, ranked 47th in the world, squandered a strong start to lose 21-19 16-21 16-21 in a match marked by fluctuating momentum and a flurry of unforced errors.

It has been a tough season for world number 17 Lakshya, who has had seven first-round exits and two second-round ousters this season. The 23-year-old, who has been affected by shoulder, back and ankle issues this season, had entered the tournament to gain some confidence before heading to the World Championships in Paris. However, it was Farhan, the 2023

World Junior Champion and a member of Indonesia's bronze-medal-winning Sudirman Cup squad, who produced a dominating performance to knock him out of the tournament.

World number 25 Farhan recovered from a 0-3 start to lead 11-7 at the first break in the opening game. He dictated the pace of rallies with precise drops and powerful smashes, catching the Indian off-guard on multiple occasions. Though Lakshya produced some eye-catching strokes, he lacked consistency, often erring in execution at crucial moments. A backhand winner brought him to 13-19, but a serve into the net handed Farhan five game points, and the Indonesian converted when Lakshya sent one long.

The second game followed a similar pattern. With Farhan leading 5-4, a 38-shot rally ended with a sharp cross smash from the Indonesian, who then extended his lead to 11-5 at the interval. Lakshya looked tentative and was unable to counter Farhan's relentless pressure at the net and forecourt.

Farhan raced to a 14-6 lead with another cross-court smash. Lakshya sent one wide and then found the net, allowing Farhan to grab 12 match points. The Indonesian missed one before sealing the match on the next opportunity. (PTI)

## Jacory Patterson worked the overnight shift loading trucks at UPS. Now, he's one of top 400 runners



**WASHINGTON, Aug 2:** At night, Jacory Patterson loaded delivery trucks at UPS. That way by day, he could train.

This routine went on for nearly a year to support his true dream job -- sprinting. Patterson's time in the 400 meters this season has never been speedier, even if he has been sometimes sleep deprived. At 25, he finally is finding his stride and along with it earning a paycheck from track.

His life began to change after winning a Grand Slam Track event in Miami, which led to Diamond League meet invitations and a sponsorship deal from Nike.

Business is now booming so much for him that Patterson was able to clock out for the final time in June from his position at UPS. He has the third-fastest time (43.98 seconds) in the world this season heading into U.S. championships this week in Eugene, Oregon, where he is eager to make even more of a name for himself.

"If everything in life was easy, everybody would be at the top," said Patterson, who advanced to the 400 final by winning his heat Friday night. "But everybody's not at the top. We've just got to understand everything won't be smooth, green grass. There's going to be some hills and some bumps and some potholes." Chip on shoulder Each time he steps into the starting blocks for a race, Patterson tells himself the same thing: Show the world. Show everyone what he can do, even if it took him a little bit longer to get here.

A standstill at Florida, he watched friends and rivals sign lucrative deals while he patiently waited for his time. His

personal-best time before this season was 44.18 in 2021.

"I knew it was there. I just had to figure it out," he said. "I would tell myself, 'Man, you're young, there's no way that you're done.'"

He moved back home to Columbia, South Carolina, and was hired at UPS last August for the overnight shift. He worked from 10:45 p.m. to around 4:30 a.m. He'd sleep for a few hours and be at practice by 8:30 a.m., ready to learn from coach Al-leyne Francique, a three-time Olympian who represented Grenada.

"The hardest part was definitely the three hours of sleep," said Patterson, who also found time to nap after training. "That was tough." Hanging in his room was a slogan: "Mind over matter." It helped him focus on the job in front of him -- getting stronger to run faster.

"I just told myself: Let's just go to the track, put the deposits in. After you leave the track, you can get your rest," he recounted. He also read novels to train his mind. In particular, a book titled, "Hung by the Tongue," by Francis P. Martin, which, in simplest terms, is a reminder that what you say is what you get.

"Just making sure that you are telling yourself the right things before you go on a track," explained Patterson, who credits his family and faith for providing support until his track career took off. "That book was powerful."

So are his prerae pep talks with himself.

"I tell myself, They can't run with you," he said. "Just things that give me

that boost, that grit."

The breakthrough Patterson gained notice at the Tom Jones Memorial meet in Gainesville, Florida, in April. He won his 400-meter heat in 44.27 seconds. In his heat that day was reigning Olympic 100-meter champion Noah Lyles.

"But Noah doesn't run the 400," Patterson said.

He wanted to go against the big names in the 400 game.

His time to shine was at a stop in Miami for Michael Johnson's new Grand Slam Track series. In the race, Patterson finished in a personal-best 43.98 seconds to edge Jereme Richards and Matthew Hudson-Smith, a silver medalist last summer at the Paris Olympics.

During a postrace interview, Richards walked by Patterson and said: "Somebody give this man a deal. Please, give this man a deal."

It was a career-altering win in numerous ways.

First, there was the \$50,000 payday (he estimates that check will hit his bank account in September, with Grand Slam Track shutting down its season early). The win also opened doors to other meets, like the one in Rabat, Morocco, where he won over a field that included Olympic champion Quincy Hall.

In addition, Patterson also got to chat at the meet with Wayne van Niekirk, who set a world record (43.03) in winning gold at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.

"I was like, 'What's the key to running 43.00?'" Patterson said. "He says, 'It's just a mental thing.'"

Soon after, Patterson finalized his deal with Nike.

"My ideal dream was to sign after college, but that wasn't the plan for me," said Patterson, who graduated from Florida in December 2023. "It just gave me an extra chip on my shoulder, too. ... If something doesn't go my way I always feel like there's another way." Quitting his night job His last day at UPS was June 5. Now, he's training full time.

"I would tell myself at work at night, This is going to pay off," said Patterson, who has been invited by UPS to speak at an upcoming company event. "I've seen so many stories where it might not be going their way when they wanted it to, but eventually things fell together for them."

"I know that as quick as you can get something, like the (Nike) deal and all the blessings that have come my way since May, it can go away that quick, too. ... You can't get comfortable. You've just got to keep going, keep working." (AP)

## Trust, team spirit key to India's comeback, say Prasadh

**LONDON, Aug 2:** India pacers Prasadh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj have credited mutual trust, responsibility, and a close-knit fast-bowling unit for the team's spirited comeback against England in the ongoing Test.

After a forgettable opening session where Siraj and Co were taken to the cleaners by Ben Duckett (43 off 38) and Zak Crawley (64 off 57), the Indian pacers bounced back in style, bowling out England for 247 in the final session to restrict the hosts to a slender 23-run lead.

"The three of us actually had a chat in the break. We said, you know, whatever happened has happened. I think we know what we have to be doing," Prasadh revealed about the turnaround in a video posted in BCCI website.

"And then make sure we back each other up every single time we are bowling there. If we feel there's a need to change in something that we're doing, we go walk up to each other and, you know, keep reminding or just bring people on to the same path as the plans were."

"I think we're really happy. Make sure we enjoy each other. Make sure you keep pushing each other, nudging each other to do better, and that's what we do."

Siraj struck thrice in a fiery eight-over spell in the afternoon, en route to his 4/86 in 16.2 overs, while Prasadh bagged 4/62 in 16 overs. At tea, England were 215 for seven, effectively eight down with Chris Woakes not available to bat due to a shoulder injury.

At stumps on Day 2, India were 75 for two in their second innings, leading by 52 runs after losing opener KL Rahul (7 off



28) to a rare loose shot.

Prasadh also highlighted the camaraderie within the pace group.

"We've been playing a lot for now, I mean, five years now, and played with him at the IPL. We sit together a lot, spend a lot of time together. Same with Akash Deep. I think the fast-bowling unit is looking pretty good," he said.

"Yeah, I think Boom (Jasprit Bumrah) also has been a great, great part of this, and I think it's really important for us to enjoy each other's success, to have that rapport off the field, so that when you're on the field, when you're speaking to each other, you have that trust, and that trust is really going to make the team better."

"We did put in a lot of work on my bowling. The intensities were different, and the areas that I was bowling were different. And I think I could say I learned from the two games that I played, and I was working on what I could do better."

Siraj shared a light-hearted moment with Bumrah during the game, saying, "I told Jassi (Bumrah) bhai, 'If I take five wickets, who should I hug?' He said, 'I'm right here, you just focus on getting those five wickets.'"

"Everybody loves playing in England because there's more swing and the pitches help fast bowlers a lot. Yes, I got five wickets, but the more we win, the more we'll rise."

"After such a bad session, to come back like this feels amazing. As a fast bowler, it's a real thrill to script such a turnaround."

"It's 100 per cent fun when you're given responsibility -- to talk to the bowlers, help them understand what needs to be done. I've worked really hard since I was a kid to reach this stage. But my mindset is simple: I give my 100 per cent, no matter what the result is," Siraj concluded. (PTI)

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